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DUNGEON™

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Push 'em Real Good

When it comes to the pace of a game, DMs like to think they're in control. After all, a DM can change the course of a session at any time with but a word. But in reality, when it comes to the hour to hour flow of the game, the PCs often set the pace.

How do players take this power out of the DM's hands? By resting. Sure, 4th Edition is better about this than previous editions. As a rule, you don't have wizards or clerics telling the group to rest after a single fight anymore. Most balanced groups can make it through five or six fights before they need to rest, often more if they're particularly skilled—or they get hot hands with their dice.

But 4th Edition still has some nonrenewable resources, most importantly daily powers and healing surges. Still, I've yet to really see dailies prevent a group from pressing on. No, what seems to stop most groups is when one or more characters run out of surges. I saw this happening last week in my game, and as the group started to debate whether to stop and rest or push on (they're on a bit of a time crunch, or I don't think it would have even been a debate), it got me thinking.

Man, it's fun when you can push a group of PCs past their comfort limits. I think that in many groups, the first PC who drops to a couple surges calls "Uncle!" and sends the rest of the party out of the dungeon. If you're a DM, this can be frustrating. Maybe the very next encounter is the last one in a long adventure, and it's going to be anticlimactic if you have to stop and wait while all your players refresh their character sheets after taking an extended rest. Or maybe, as in my case, there's supposed to be a time crunch, and the PCs are supposed to feel some pressure to continue.

When the group suddenly stops because the wizard wants his spent sleep power back, all I want to say is, "Gah! Are you adventurers, or chumps?!" If this has happened to you, then I have one word for you:

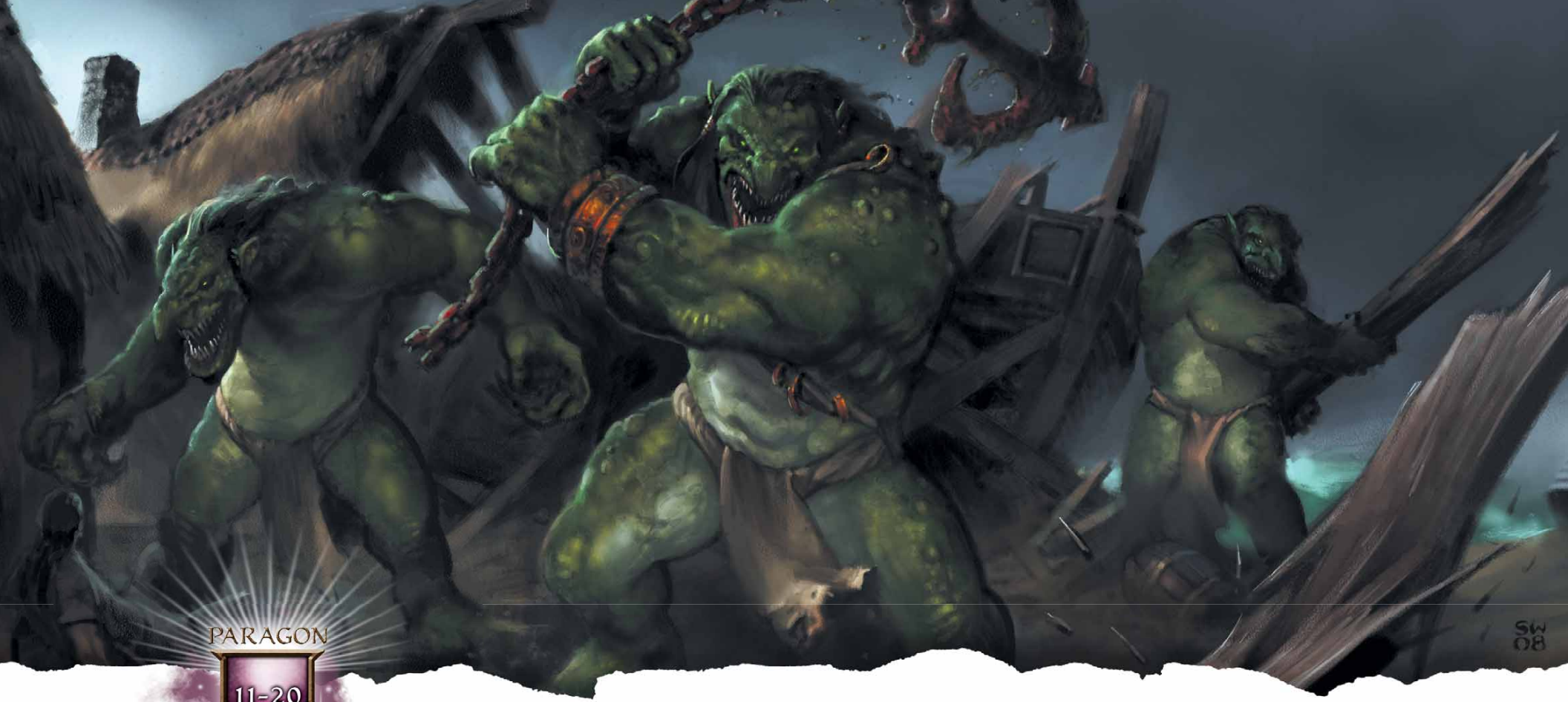
Push.

That's right, don't let 'em rest. Have a breathless NPC show up and ask for their immediate help. Start a skill challenge. Or just send in a fresh wave of bad guys.

Chris Perkins is a master of the push. In fact, he's used it dozens of times in his campaigns, often when the PCs felt genuinely deserving of rest. I can remember the party wizard telling the group he's down to 1st- and 2nd-level spells, plus maybe a couple of wands, and Chris dropping us into a big fight. And then another one. And then another. We found creative ways to contribute, even if we were out of spells. We scoured the *Player's Handbook* for tactics (Aid Another!) and our character sheets for something—anything—that could help ("What if I take this sunrod and..."). And we rose to the challenge, every time. And those were some of the best, most memorable fights of all, precisely because we weren't at our best.

So last week, when my group debated on whether to rest after two characters spent their last healing surges (and one of them at less than full hit points), I decided to push. The NPC accompanying them, himself almost bloodied, told them they needed to continue. That the safety of the region depended on it. And with that, they kicked in the next door, to be continued this week.

I can't wait to see what happens.



PARAGON
11-20

A *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens* side trek

by Logan Bonner

Beyond the Trollhaunt

illustrations by Sam Wood ✦ *cartography by Kyle Hunter*

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Over the course of *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*, plenty of places can lead to more adventure. You can use these encounters if your PCs are a little behind on experience or if they've found an area they'd like to explore. The first two encounters can be dropped into other adventures easily. The third one works well if the PCs are having an easy time during the raid on Moonstair and need a little more pressure to feel challenged.

Adventure Background

The background for these encounters is in *P1: King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*. All these encounters occur in places onto which the DM was meant to build.

Adventure Synopsis

This Side Trek consists of four encounters.

- The first encounter has the PCs face drow and bladerager troll enforcers who have abducted eladrin from Celduilon. This encounter takes place in one of the many troll ruins within the Trollhaunt. It includes ties to adventure *P2: Demon Queen's Enclave*.
- The second encounter is set in one of the passageways that branches off from the map of the Trollhaunt Warrens. In a steamy cavern that opens up around the water-filled passageway, galeb duhr and redspawn firebelchers dwell. Even trolls refuse to enter this secluded cavern.
- Amid the chaos of the raid on Moonstair, trolls wreck a sailing ship into the town. In the third encounter, they begin their rampage, using the wreckage as a weapon.
- The last encounter can take place after the adventure, inside the abandoned fomorian fortress of Mross-Kagg. A band of traitorous drow and their duped cyclops companions set up a shrine to Orcus in the ruined fomorian fortress. This encounter can serve as an adventure hook for *Demon Queen's Enclave*.

It's dark inside. . . . You hear the sound of deep breathing, like a large beast might make . . .

Encounter 1: Dwellers in the Ruins

Encounter Level 11 (3,200 XP)
2 bladerager troll enforcers (B)
3 drow warriors (D)
4 eladrin captives (E)

3 Drow Warriors (D)	**Level 11 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid	XP 600 each
Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision	
HP 83; **Bloodied** 41	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 19	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Rapier** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the drow warrior makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +13 vs. Fortitude; see *drow poison* for the effect.	
➳ **Hand Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the drow warrior makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +13 vs. Fortitude; see *drow poison* for the effect.	
➳ **Darkfire** (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow warrior's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
Combat Advantage	
The drow warrior deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Drow Poison ✦ **Poison**	
A creature hit by a weapon coated in *drow poison* takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven	
Skills Dungeoneering +11, Intimidate +8, Stealth +15	
Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+6)	
Con 11 (+5) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+6)	
Equipment chainmail, rapier*, hand crossbow, 20 bolts*	
**These weapons are coated in drow poison.*	

Setup

This encounter can take place in any of the ruins within the Trollhaunt (described in *Adventure Book One*, pages 8–9). You can make minor adjustments to suit the specific ruin (vegetation growing into the building in the forest ruin, more flooding in the lakeside ruin, and so on).

The PCs see light coming from one of the buildings (if it's night) or hear deep, grotesque chortling (if it's day). They find a building that appears to be occupied.

The PCs can place their miniatures anywhere outside the building. Also make sure you know their passive Perception scores for the Perception checks below.

Perception Check
DC 16: *There's a smaller room within the larger structure. It's dark inside, but you can just make out some eladrin captives chained to the far wall.*
DC 21: *You hear the sound of deep breathing, like a large beast might make, along with the sound of metal scraping against metal. It's clearly coming from the smaller room.*

A PC can look through the doorway (which has no door) or pull aside one of the ragged hides that serve as curtains. Read:

A few drow warriors sit in the middle of the room, gathered around a small fire. Several thick pillars support the roof, but they're in bad shape, and piles of rubble cover the floor around them.

Have any PC who looked in the building make a Stealth check and compare it to the drow warriors' passive Perception of 21. The PC takes a -5 penalty to the check if he or she pulled aside a curtain at a window. If they are detected, roll initiative. Otherwise, the PCs have a surprise round.

2 Bladerager Troll Enforcers (B)	**Level 12 Brute**
Large natural humanoid	XP 700 each
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9	
HP 151; **Bloodied** 75	
Regeneration 10 (if the bladerager troll enforcer takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23	
Speed 7	
⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Bladerager Rend** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
✲ **Death Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points or less)	
The bladerager troll enforcer explodes in a burst of shrapnel. Close burst 2; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 damage.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	
Skills Athletics +17, Endurance +16	
Str 23 (+12) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+9)	
Con 21 (+11) **Int** 3 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+6)	

When the bladerager troll enforcers join the fight, read:

This troll is covered in metal plates that have been bolted onto its body. Long metal claws extend from its fingers. Madness fills the creature's eyes, and an expression of constant pain contorts its features.

Tactics

At the start of the encounter, the drow are sitting. Treat them as prone: They need to spend a move action to stand. The drow flank foes to gain combat advantage. After the bladeragers join the fray, the drow might have a chance to hide behind columns and use Stealth to gain combat advantage instead.

The bladerager troll enforcers enter the fight in the second round (ignore the surprise round if the PCs have one). They swing wildly, lashing out at whoever is nearest. If an enemy is behind a pillar, a bladerager smashes down the pillar to hurt its foe, even if the troll or its allies take damage, too. It's best if the trolls take out some pillars early—you don't want their *death burst* to trigger a cascade of damage over a large area when they die.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light inside the main area of the building, dim light in the smaller room. The outside area has bright light if the encounter occurs during the day or dim light if at night.

Bogs: These areas of marsh and mud are difficult terrain (requiring 1 extra square of movement to enter).

Campfire: A creature moving into the campfire square or starting its turn there takes 2d6 fire damage.

Curtains: A creature adjacent to a window can use the curtain as superior cover, but open it to shoot.

Crumbling Pillars: A creature can attack a pillar (AC 4, other defenses 12, and 10 hp). If a pillar is destroyed, the pillar begins to shatter, then the ceiling collapses at the end of the current turn. The rubble hits all squares within 2 of the pillar. Make an attack against each creature in the area: +14 vs. Reflex; 3d6 damage.

Rubble: The rubble around the pillars is difficult terrain (requiring 1 extra square of movement to enter).

Treasure: The drow warriors have the equipment noted in their stat blocks. In gratitude, the eladrin captives give the PCs a level 13 magic item. Pull it from the PCs' wish lists or choose from the following list: *periapt of wisdom* +3, *winged boots*, *wand of (power level 7 or lower)* +3, or *symbol of hope* +3. This is treasure parcel 3 for a party of 11th-level characters.

Eladrin Captives

The eladrin captives chained in the back room were being tortured by the bladerager troll enforcers, but they're all alive. They are from Celduilon and had been sent in secret to assist the people of Moonstair. They give the PCs a magic item in gratitude (see the "Treasure" section above), then leave to return home. They are injured, but are confident that they can make the return trip without assistance.

Secrets of the Drow

Among the possessions carried by the drow warriors, the PCs can find instructions that were given to the warriors. They indicate that the drow are supposed to accompany the bladerager troll enforcers so that they could show that the drow are committed to their proposed alliance with Skalmad. Through various hints in the text, the PCs can figure out that these drow are refugees from a drow enclave that has been taken over by a rival group of drow. The rival group has differing beliefs from most drow, but the letter doesn't make it clear what those beliefs are.

This storyline is meant to tie into *P2: Demon Queen's Enclave*. If you want to make the tie more obvious, drop more hints about this proposed alliance into encounter W12.

Running a Higher-Level Encounter

Exploring the ruins might be the PCs' next adventure after the end of P1. If you use this encounter in this way, replace the three drow warriors with two drow blademasters, and add one more bladerager troll enforcer. This makes the encounter level 14 (5,300 XP).

Encounter 2: Steam Cavern

Encounter Level 13 (3,800 XP)
4 galeb duhr rockcallers (G)
2 redspawn firebelchers (R)

Setup

This encounter is in the general area of the Great Warren, but off the map. If the PCs travel down one of the passages that leads off the map, you can place this encounter in any passage.

A superheated rock in this cavern boils off water and fills the room with steam, making it a comfortable environment for redspawn firebelchers. Trolls rarely come into this area, fearing the creatures' fire and not seeing any advantage to passing through it. There might even be warnings scrawled in Giant telling trolls to keep out.

The PCs can place their miniatures inside the room's entrance. Also make sure you know their passive Perception scores for the Perception check below.

As the PCs near the cavern, read:

As you move along, you feel the temperature growing constantly warmer, and the air begins to cloud with steam.

When they look in the cave, read:

Ahead of you, a cavern opens up around the stream. A little ways into this cavern sits a small, rocky outcropping. It glows faintly, and the water all around it bubbles as though it's boiling. Some areas of the cavern are higher ground, with no water covering them. You can make out reddish, reptilian creatures on the far side of the room.

4 Galeb Duhr Rockcallers (G) **Level 11 Controller**
Medium elemental humanoid (earth) XP 600 each

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +12; tremorsense 10
HP 118; **Bloodied** 59
AC 25; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22
Immune petrification, poison
Speed 4 (earth walk), burrow 6

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+16 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.

Rolling Attack (standard; at-will)
The galeb duhr rockcaller moves 4 squares and then attacks an adjacent target; +14 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.

Earthen Grasp (standard; at-will)
An earthen fist rises up to restrain a target. Ranged 10; +14 vs. Fortitude; the target is restrained (save ends). The target must be in direct contact with the ground or the attack fails. The rockcaller can use *earthen grasp* against only one creature at a time.

Rocky Terrain (minor; at-will)
Ranged 10; 4 squares within range become difficult terrain. The squares need not be contiguous, but the affected terrain must consist of earth or stone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Dwarven, Giant
Skills Stealth +10
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 10 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 22 (+11) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+6)

Roll a Stealth check for each galeb duhr rockcaller (+10 bonus). If a PC's passive Perception exceeds the Stealth check, read:

You see that one of the rocks is moving slightly.

Point out all the galeb duhr rockcallers each player detected.

2 Redspawn Firebelchers (R) **Level 12 Artillery**
Large natural beast (reptile) XP 700 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
Fire Within (**Fire**) aura 5; allies in the aura gain resist 10 fire.
HP 97; **Bloodied** 48
AC 25; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Resist 20 fire
Speed 4

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+16 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Fire Belch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 12; +15 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Fire Burst (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 2 within 10; +15 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 2 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+5)

Tactics

The monsters here have a simple division of labor in combat, with the galeb duhr rockcallers attacking anyone who comes onto land, and the redspawn firebelchers lobbing flames at creatures that stay in the water.

The galeb duhr stick to using *earthen grasp* against creatures on the ground to keep them from moving back into the water. However, they sometimes use *rolling attack* to knock creatures into boiling water.

If a creature moves far from the waterline, several galeb duhrs use *rocky terrain* to surround the creature and the water with difficult terrain.

If the PCs don't move onto the ground, the galeb duhr rockcallers use *rolling attack* to hit them. If no one is within reach, a galeb duhr burrows underneath the water and arises on the other side.

The redspawn firebelchers prefer to stay away from the entrance and away from combat, letting the galeb duhrs and difficult terrain keep back their foes. The space they occupy is limited, so they're easy targets. They might move into the water to escape melee combatants who move up to them. Keep in mind that the firebelchers' attacks can create steam, but *fire burst* and *fire belch* ignore concealment since they affect an area.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light.

Water: A creature in the water gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against ongoing fire damage. The water is difficult terrain, and it isn't deep enough to require creatures to swim.

Boiling Water: A creature that moves into the area of boiling water or starts its turn in the area takes 5 fire damage.

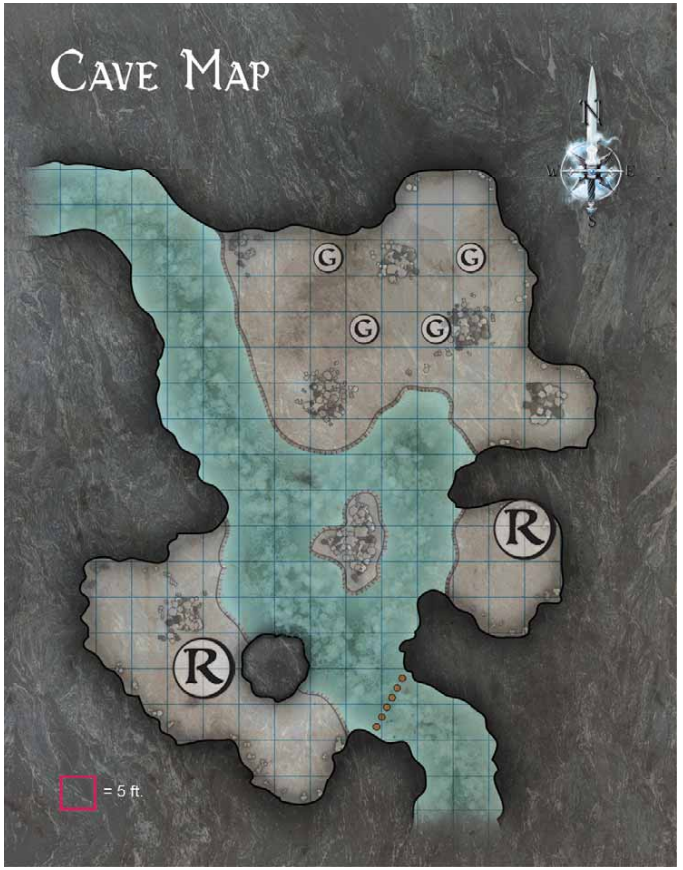
Portcullis: This wooden portcullis blocks the exiting section of the stream. It can be broken with a Strength check (DC 23) or smashed (AC 4, Fortitude 12, and 40 hp).

Rocks: The rocks are difficult terrain. Treat the galeb duhrs as normal rocks if they have not yet revealed themselves.

Superheated Rock: The large rock in the middle of the stream is extremely hot. A creature moving onto it or starting its turn on it takes 10 fire damage. The rock is also difficult terrain. The rock is not tall enough to provide cover.

Steam: The room is filled with steam. The squares adjacent to the superheated rock are lightly obscured (providing concealment), but the steam isn't thick enough in the rest of the room. Fire attacks can create thicker steam (see the "Fire Attacks" sidebar).

Treasure: The galeb duhrs buried some gems taken from humanoids who passed through this area. It takes a DC 20 Perception check to find where the ground was disturbed. If the PCs miss the treasure, include it in a hoard later in the adventure. There are four 1,000 gp gems and nine 500 gp gems. This is treasure parcel 6 for a party of 13th-level characters.



Fire Attacks Make Steam

If a fire attack hits squares of water, it creates a column of dense steam. The steam appears in any squares of an area or close attack or in the same square as the target of a melee or ranged attack. The square or squares become lightly obscured, providing concealment.

Encounter 3: Shipwreck

Encounter Level 12 (3,300 XP)
1 anchor troll (A)
1 troll timber slinger (S)
4 trolls (T)

Setup

This encounter occurs during the raid on Moonstair. You can place it at any point during the raid and on either shoreline of the town.

A group of six trolls hijacked a sailing ship and killed the crew. They then crashed the ship into the shore (and through a house) and have begun to rampage through the town. The PCs can see the wreck (if they're close enough) or hear the thundering crash as the ship runs aground.

The PCs can place their miniatures on the south edge of the map, either on the road or the blank area on the southeast.

When the PCs arrive on the scene, read:

Near the shore, a cloud of dust rises from the site of a wreckage. A sailing ship has run aground and plowed into a house here. Both the house and ship are demolished, and enormous timbers litter the ground. Barrels from the ship have scattered all around, and you can see and smell that some of them are leaking lamp oil.

Amid the houses several trolls roam, looking for trouble. One of them carries a blood-spattered sail it must have ripped from the ship's mast.

Another troll stands atop the smashed house, tearing beams loose from the roof in a senseless rage.

Anchor Troll (A) **Level 14 Controller**
Large natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +14
HP 139; **Bloodied** 69; see also *troll healing*
Regeneration 10 (if the troll takes acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 23
Speed 7

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.

Wrapping Chain (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 5; +18 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is restrained (save ends). The restrained effect ends if the troll and the target move more than 5 squares apart.

Chain Slam (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
This attack can be used only against a creature restrained by *wrapping chain*. The troll swings the chain that has snared its target, and slams the creature against the ground. Move the target to any square within 5 of the troll and make an attack: +18 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone. *Effect:* The target is no longer restrained.

Anchor Tornado (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 5; +19 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 15 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +18, Endurance +16
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+8)
Equipment ship's anchor

A larger, more muscular troll wanders about, dragging a massive metal chain. At the end of the chain, you see the ship's anchor scraping along the ground.

When the trolls see you, they roar at you. The one with the anchor begins swinging it over its head in wide circles. The troll atop the house hefts a beam like it's ready to throw it, and the other trolls rush toward you.

Roll initiative.

Troll Timber Slinger (S) **Level 12 Artillery**
Large natural humanoid XP 700

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 109; **Bloodied** 54; see also *troll healing*
Regeneration 10 (if the troll takes acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
AC 24; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
Speed 8

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.

Timber Toss (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Area burst 1 within 15; +16 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 damage. If you hit the creature in the origin square of the burst, that creature takes 1d6 extra damage.

Timber Swing (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 3; +16 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**
If the troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 10 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +15
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 19 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+7)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 5 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+6)

Tactics

Choose one of the normal trolls to carry the ship's sail. It can use a standard action to toss the sail over a creature. It gains the following attack:

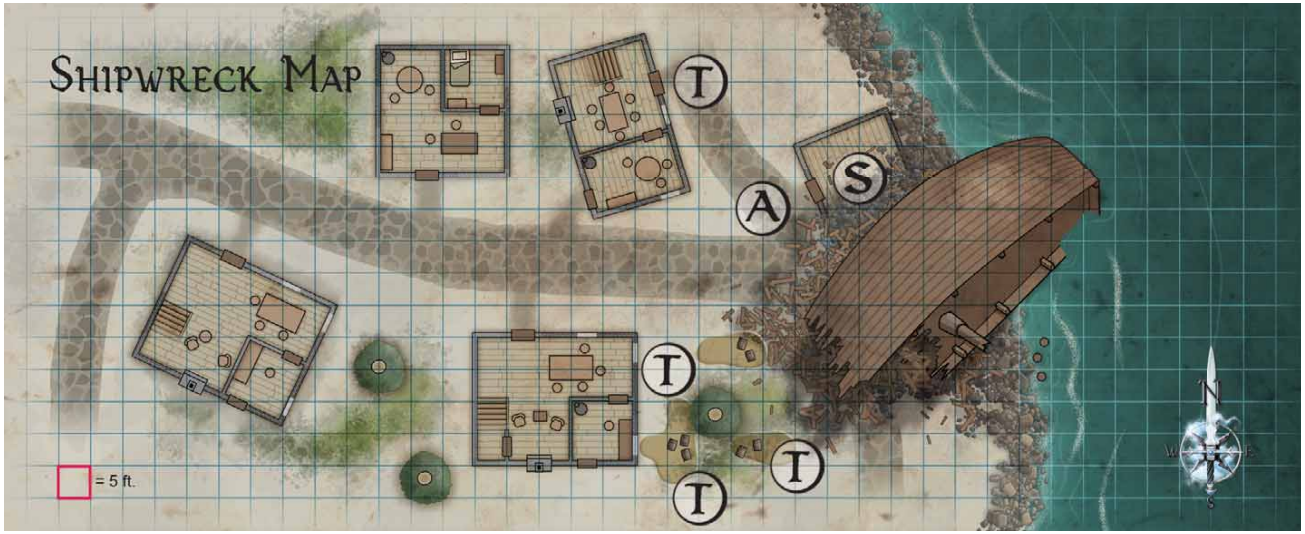
Sail Wrap (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. Reflex; The target is blinded and slowed (save ends). If the target attacks the sail, the sail is destroyed and both conditions end.

The anchor troll uses *wrapping chain*, followed by *chain slam* if the target doesn't save. If a PC creates a damaging zone, or if the barrels or lamp oil are lit on fire, the anchor troll uses *chain slam* to toss its allies into the damaging effect.

4 Trolls (T)	Level 9 Brute
Large natural humanoid	XP 400 each
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +11	
HP 100; **Bloodied** 50; see also *troll healing*	
Regeneration 10 (if the troll takes acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Speed 8	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage; see also frenzied strike.	
⸸ **Frenzied Strike** (free, when the troll's attack bloodies an enemy; at-will)	
The troll makes a claw attack.	
Troll Healing ✦ **Healing**	
If the troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 10 hit points.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant	
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +14	
Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+6)	
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+4)	

The timber slinger stays atop the house and uses its area attack. It uses *timber swing* only if creatures move close, then grabs an armful of timbers (a minor action) and retreats to throw timber from a distance.

The trolls avoid fighting in the water if at all possible.



Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Deep Water: The water varies from 10 to 15 feet deep. Creatures in deep water must use the Athletics skill to move. Creatures in deep water gain cover (-2 to attack rolls) except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows, and powers that have the fire keyword take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

A creature in the water can move onto the shore by spending 1 extra square of movement.

Barrels: Numerous barrels have tumbled out of the smashed ship. They are filled with lamp oil, and some have ruptured. If a barrel is hit with a fire attack, it explodes in a burst 1, dealing 2d6 fire damage to each creature in the burst. The area of the burst burns until the end of the encounter, dealing 2d6 fire damage to each creature that moves into the square or starts its turn in the square.

Some barrels are already ruptured, and oil has leaked on the ground. If a square of spilled oil is hit with a fire attack, it burns until the end of the encounter, as described above.

A nonruptured barrel can be destroyed (AC 10, Fortitude 5, and 5 hp). This fills the barrel's square and all adjacent squares with oil.

Smashed Ship: The debris from the front of the ship is difficult terrain. A creature can gain cover by hiding inside the ship.

Houses: The DC to climb the buildings' walls is 20. A house is 2 squares tall.

Treasure: The trolls don't have any treasure on them. The owners of the wrecked ship, a group of merchants, offer 3,000 gp as thanks to the PCs for stopping the creatures that attacked their friends and employees. This is a treasure parcel 8 for a party of 11th-level characters.

Encounter 4: Cultists in the Keep

Encounter Level 14 (5,000 XP)
- **2 cyclops ramblers (C)**
- **1 drow necromancer (N)**
- **2 drow warriors (D)**

Setup

After the final encounter of *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens* (C6), this encounter takes place in the abandoned fomorian fortress of Mross-Kagg. The encounter has strong ties to *P2: Demon Queen's Enclave*. Remove references to Orcus if you don't plan to run that adventure.

Some refugees from the drow outpost of Phaervorul have come to Skalmad and the fomorians, and these drow want to form an alliance against the Orcus-worshiping drow who are trying to kill them and take over Phaervorul. The drow in this encounter are cultists of Orcus who have taken advantage of this situation. After mentally dominating some cyclops guards, they come to Mross-Kagg to set up a shrine to Orcus, where they sacrifice the drow emissaries (there are more than just the ones in encounter W12).

When the PCs have finished encounter C6 (probably while they're looking through the treasure vault),

2 Cyclops Ramblers (C) **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Large fey humanoid XP 1,000 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; truesight 6
Mocking Eye aura 10; an enemy in the aura that makes an opportunity attack against any target takes a -5 penalty to the attack roll.
HP 141; **Bloodied** 70
AC 29; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26
Speed 8

Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage.

Evil Eye (minor; at-will)
Ranged 20; the cyclops rambler can designate only one target with its *evil eye* at a time. It can move 2 squares any time it shifts from a square adjacent to the designated target.

Feywild Alacrity (free, when the cyclops rambler hits the target of its *evil eye* power; recharge ⚅)
The cyclops rambler gains an extra move action, which it must use before the end of its turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 19 (+11)
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+8)
Equipment chainmail, greatsword

Drow Necromancer (N) **Level 15 Controller (Leader)**
Medium fey humanoid XP 1,200

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
Orcus's Rage aura 10; living allies in the aura gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and take a -2 penalty to defenses.
HP 142; **Bloodied** 71
AC 29; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28
Speed 6

Skull Rod (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 necrotic damage.

Skull Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic (save ends).

Dark Enervation (standard; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 3; each enemy in burst; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 necrotic damage, the target is pushed 1, and the target is weakened until the end of the necromancer's next turn.

Voices of Undeath (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
Area burst 1 within 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is deafened (save ends). Until the target is no longer deafened, he or she has vulnerable necrotic 5.

Life Leech (minor, usable only while bloodied; at-will)
Each ally within 10 takes 5 damage, and the drow necromancer regains hit points equal to the total damage dealt.

Zombify (minor; at-will)
Ranged 20; target a cyclops rambler that has been reduced to 0 hit points or fewer. It becomes a cyclops rambler zombie, and is now alive with full hit points (but still prone). Roll initiative for the creature.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +14, Intimidate +19, Stealth +12
Str 13 (+8) **Dex** 17 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 14 (+9) **Int** 25 (+14) **Cha** 20 (+12)
Equipment skull rod, robes

2 Drow Warriors (D) **Level 11 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid XP 600 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
HP 83; **Bloodied** 41
AC 24; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 19
Speed 6

Rapier (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (×2)

Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison, Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the drow warrior makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +13 vs. Fortitude; see *drow poison* for the effect.

Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow warrior's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.

Combat Advantage
The drow warrior deals 2d6 extra damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Drow Poison ✦ Poison
A creature hit by a weapon coated in *drow poison* takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Save:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Dungeoneering +11, Intimidate +8, Stealth +15
Str 14 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+6)
Con 11 (+5) **Int** 13 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, rapier*, hand crossbow, 20 bolts*
**These weapons are coated in drow poison.*

2 Cyclops Rambler Zombies	Level 15 Brute
Large fey humanoid (undead)	XP 600* each
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision	
HP 92*; **Bloodied** 46; see also *zombie weakness*	
AC 27; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 27	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Double Slam** (standard; encounter)	
The zombie makes two slam attacks against different targets.	
⚚ **Undead Eye** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 20; the cyclops rambler zombie can designate only one target with its *undead eye* at a time. If it hits the designated creature, the cyclops rambler zombie deals 1d8 extra necrotic damage.	
Zombie Weakness	
Any critical hit to the cyclops rambler zombie reduces it to 0 hit points instantly.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –	
Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 15 (+9) **Wis** 18 (+11)	
Con 24 (+14) **Int** 1 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+6)	
Equipment chainmail	
* This creature has half hit points and is worth half experience for a creature of its level.	

they hear a pounding sound from up above. After a few seconds, it becomes clear they're hearing heavy footsteps. When they go back above, they find that someone is guarding the former throne room.

The PCs can place their miniatures on the south side of the map.

The cyclops ramblers can turn into zombies later in the fight.

When the PCs see the drow and cyclopses, read:

Ahead you see two drow standing guard. Their armor is adorned with skull motifs. Behind them, two cyclopses stand guard in the middle of massive doorways. Their eyes are glazed over and a faint aura of purple energy surrounds them.

When the necromancer turns a dead cyclops into a zombie, read:

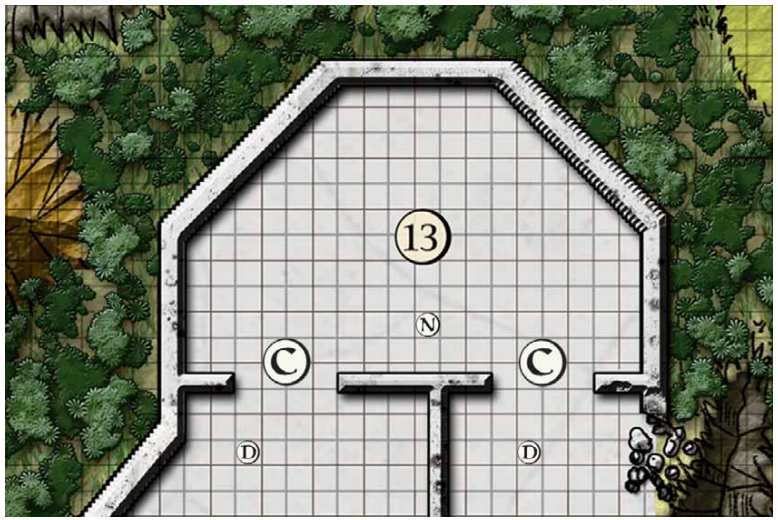
The necromancer gestures at the cyclops's corpse and says, "In the name of Orcus, return to fight again!" The corpse lurches back to its feet.

When a cyclops rambler zombie is killed, read:

The cyclops zombie falls apart into a pile of bone and decayed flesh, its undead energy depleted.

Tactics

All the creatures here regard the drow necromancer as the most important of their group, either because of its connection to Orcus (in the case of the drow warriors) or because they're mentally compelled to (the cyclopses). The cyclopses protect the drow necromancer at all costs, and the drow warriors flank with the cyclopses.



The necromancer focuses fire on a target it hits with *voices of undeath*, taking advantage of the vulnerability to necrotic. When enemies come close, the necromancer uses *dark enervation*. As soon as a cyclops falls in battle, the necromancer uses *zombify*.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light (from sunlight during the day or torchlight at night).

Rift: The rift is 100 feet deep (falling damage 10d10). ⚔

About the Author

Logan Bonner works as a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His professional RPG credits include *City of Stormreach*, *Dungeonscape*, and the *Magic Item Compendium*.

HEROIC
1–10

"The armies that today march across the fields and mountains of the world will tomorrow be forgotten, as will we all. But do not fear the progress of history, nor give up in today's fight, for our efforts are far from futile. Instead, prepare your sword and shield and stand against the tide that threatens to overwhelm our lands. For though you and I may be forgotten in the years to come, what we do today will echo through the ages and determine the fate of all those who follow in our footsteps."

by Rodney Thompson
illustrations by Jason A. Engle, Rob Alexander and Steve Prescott
✦
cartography by Mike Schley

SCALES OF WAR™

An adventure for 7th-level characters

DEN OF THE DESTROYER

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"Den of the Destroyer" is an adventure for five 7th-level characters. By the end of the adventure, the characters should reach 9th level. You can run this adventure as the sequel to "The Lost Mines of Karak," continuing the unfolding story of the Scales of War adventure path, or run it as part of a campaign of your own design.

In this adventure, the PCs are called back to Brindol by a surprising summons that sees them undertake a dangerous mission to an abandoned githzerai fortress. Along the way, they must deal with bounty hunters hired by an old enemy, and confront a vile gang of gnolls terrorizing Elsir Vale.

BACKGROUND

Some months ago, a mysterious figure calling himself only the Emissary contacted the hobgoblin chieftain Sinruth and spurred him into reviving the marauding horde known as the Red Hand of Doom. Unbeknownst to both Sinruth and the PCs, this Emissary was the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan. Simultaneously, Sarshan began sending messages to the leader of a band of gnoll mercenaries, a disciple of Yeenoghu named Fangren, in the hopes of inciting the gnolls in a similar fashion.

The gnolls were not so easily commanded, however, forcing Sarshan to take more drastic steps. While the goblins were content to raid Brindol thanks to little more than motivational letters, the gnoll mercenaries required something more. In order to secure their services, Sarshan arranged for the gnolls to receive several shipments of shadar-kai weapons from his storehouses in the Shadowfell. In exchange, Fangren agreed to lead his mercenaries across Elsir Vale, pillaging, plundering, and seizing as many captives as possible.

Fangren and his mercenaries went about the agreed-upon task with gusto, carving a swath of destruction across the borders of Elsir Vale. Using an ancient githzerai monastery known as Fortress Graystone for their base of operations, the gnolls began kidnapping innocent inhabitants of the Vale for their own sinister pleasures. Most of their raids focused on outlying settlements, allowing them to wreak havoc without drawing the attention of more powerful parties.

As the gnolls found more and more success in their raids on the Vale, their leader grew even hungrier for power. Soon, Fangren came to believe that their success was not due to shadar-kai weaponry but by the favor of the demon lord Yeenoghu. Fangren quickly started to see himself not as merely the leader of a band of gnolls, but as a chosen one of Yeenoghu, with a destiny to become one of the demon lord's exarchs.

While he sent his bands of mercenaries across the Vale, Fangren began gathering the components for the bloody ritual that would infuse him with the foul power of Yeenoghu. The gnoll shaman has completed the first phase of the ritual deep inside the githzerai fortress, opening an energy conduit to the Elemental Chaos in the hope of embracing the power of the Ruler of Ruin.

However, the creation of this conduit and the powerful magic of Fangren's ritual have had an effect the gnoll shaman did not expect. Within the Hall of Great Valor in Brindol, magic long hidden within an ancient ceremonial sword has been awoken. A week past, the sword spoke, begging the aid of a group of heroes—and asking for the PCs by name.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In the aftermath of "Rescue at Rivenroar," the PCs recovered not only the kidnapped inhabitants of Brindol but also several relics of great historical value to the inhabitants of Elsir Vale. Among these was a ceremonial platinum longsword. Though the folk of the vale have no knowledge of the sword being magic (and though the PCs would have detected no magic within it), it contains a primal essence that has been reawakened by Fangren's powerful rituals. (If the PCs did not recover the treasures of the Hall of Great Valor, the sword was recovered by a local patrol that mopped up at Rivenroar after the party left.)

The PCs are assumed to be in the city of Overlook when the adventure begins, most likely after returning and resting up from their adventures in "The Lost Mines of Karak." The PCs hear that a messenger has recently arrived from Brindol, desperately seeking the party.

On further investigation, the PCs discover that this messenger has been captured by a band of Lost Ones, the powerful thieving guild the PCs faced off against in "Shadow Rift of Umbraforge." After rescuing the messenger, the players are beseeched to return to Brindol.

Arriving in the town, the PCs head to the Hall of Great Valor and speak with the curator Sertanian, then with the sword itself. Identifying itself as Amyria, the sword charges the party with a mission: travel to an abandoned githzerai fortress now occupied by savage gnoll mercenaries, then perform a ritual to transform the sword into its true form. Even as the PCs weigh their next move, bounty hunters from Overlook attack the museum, wrecking the place as they target the party on behalf of an unknown patron.

With the sword in their possession, the PCs travel to the githzerai fortress. However, the arduous journey is made more dangerous by another bounty hunter—the elf Gilgathorn, who knows that Sarshan is the one who has put a price on the PCs' heads. The PCs arrive at the monastery and fight their way through its gnoll defenders, Gilgathorn waiting for an opportune moment to make his move.

In the end, the PCs find the ritual chamber and face off against Fangren. The energy conduit to the Elemental Chaos has been opened, the shaman channeling the power of Yeenoghu against the PCs. After defeating Fangren, the PCs perform the ritual that transforms the spirit of Amyria into its true form—a mysterious young woman who will come to play a central role in the events the PCs are caught up in.

The Quests

"Den of the Destroyer" offers the opportunity for PCs to earn quest XP in two places. Provided here is a list of quests, and their rewards, in the adventure.

Major Quest—The Ritual of Amyria
The PCs must reach the ritual chamber in Fortress Graystone, then perform the ritual described to them by the spirit trapped within the platinum longsword.
Reward: 2,000 XP.

Minor Quest—The Captives' Fate
The PCs need to discover what happened to the citizens of Elsir Vale who have been kidnapped by the gnolls.
Reward: 350 XP.

Preparing for Adventure

"Den of the Destroyer" takes the PCs from the city of Overlook to Brindol, and then to a githzerai fortress hidden in the Giant's Shield mountains. As they seek to end the threat of the gnoll shaman Fangren and his followers, the PCs are pursued by bounty hunters who they eventually discover have been sent by the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan. One of those bounty hunters—the elf Gilgathorn—is an ongoing threat as the PCs take the fight to the gnolls in Fortress Graystone.

If you are anxious to start the adventure, read the introductory material (including the "Finding the Messenger" skill challenge) and the first two encounters ("Kidnappers" and "The Hall of Great Valor"). This will take the PCs up to the point where the sword asks for their aid, providing an exciting first adventure session.

The bulk of the combat encounters take place within the ancient githzerai monastery known as Fortress Graystone. Some of the encounters within the fortress can take place in different areas, so familiarize yourself with the citadel's overall layout.

What You Need to Play

This adventure contains everything you need to play, including background information, setup, and encounters (including tactical maps). Reading through the Dungeons & Dragons *4th Edition* rules is your first best step to understanding and preparing to run the adventure. As mentioned above, read through at least the opening sections and initial encounters before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation. The sections below describe the adventure format.

Revelations

"Den of the Destroyer" leads directly into the climax of the heroic tier adventures in the Scales of War adventure path. Many of the disparate pieces of information the PCs have gathered over the course of their previous adventures begin to come together in this adventure. As such, you will want to emphasize the following points of revelation to the players.

- The gnolls of the Wicked Fang pack have been hired by the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan to do his bidding in Elsir Vale. He has given them specific instructions, including seizing (and holding) Fortress Graystone and kidnapping powerful individuals from across the Vale.
- A bounty has been placed on the PCs' heads by Sarshan himself.
- Fortress Graystone is more than an ancient ruin. The githzerai who built it did so to protect a long-dormant energy conduit that links the site to both the Elemental Chaos and the Astral Sea.
- Sinruth, from "Rescue at Rivenroar," was also manipulated into doing Sarshan's bidding by the arms dealer's deception.
- The platinum sword from Brindol is in reality the alternate form of a divine being whose full identity and purpose are yet to be revealed.

Using Tactical Encounters

Each encounter includes several common elements.

Encounter Level

Each tactical encounter assumes a group of five player characters. An encounter of average difficulty is one where the encounter level is equal to the level of the party. Encounters that are 1 or 2 levels lower than the party are easy encounters, while encounters that are a higher level than the party are difficult encounters.

For overcoming an encounter, a group earns the XP value noted beside the encounter level. This amount should be divided by the number of group members, and an equal amount should be awarded to each character.

Setup

This section of a tactical encounter provides you with the basic parameters of the encounter. First, it provides a key to the monsters in the encounter so you can locate them on the tactical map. Next, it provides context or background information for the encounter. The map of each encounter area indicates where the monsters are located when the encounter begins. The setup section also describes what the monsters are doing and how they react when the PCs arrive.

Read Aloud Text

Read aloud text provides information detailing what the characters can see and are aware of. You do not have to read it word for word; feel free to paraphrase and use your own words when describing this information.

Use read aloud text wisely. It is written for the most common approach to a particular situation, but what your player characters do might require you to alter the information in any number of ways.

Monster Statistics

Encounters include stat blocks for each monster type present in the encounter. If more than one monster of a particular kind is present, the stat block indicates how many creatures can be found.

Tactics

This entry describes special actions the monsters take to defeat the adventurers. Sometimes this means the monsters take advantage of special features of the area or make use of special powers or equipment.

Map

Each encounter includes a map keyed with the initial locations of each monster. The map also indicates the location of any special features of the area.

Features of the Area

This section describes special features noted on the map. If the location has items or areas of interest with which the characters can interact, those features are described here. Look here to see if a door is out of the ordinary, if an altar has a secret compartment, or if the area includes treasure.

Treasure Preparation

As with the previous installments of the Scales of War adventure path, this adventure makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate fifteen parcels by the end of the adventure. You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the sidebar presents the most likely areas to feature treasure. During your preparation, assign parcels to the areas in the spaces provided.

TREASURE PARCELS

Parcel A: _____ , Temple of Pelor.
Parcel B: _____, Hall of Great Valor.
Parcel C: _____, The Stairs.
Parcel D: _____, Githzerai Mind Trap.
Parcel E: _____ , The Cells.
Parcel F: _____ , Training Chamber.
Parcel G: _____, Meditation Chamber.
Parcel H: _____ , Marshaling Point.
Parcel I: Parcel 14, Marshaling Point.
Parcel J: _____ , Ritual Chamber.
Parcel K: _____ , Ritual Chamber.
Parcel L: _____, Thorn's Attack.
Parcel M: Parcel 15, Thorn's Attack.
Parcel N: Parcel 16, Thorn's Attack.

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the spaces above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for the first four parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 11
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 11
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 9
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 8
Parcel 5: 1,500 gp art object + 400 gp
Parcel 6: Three 500 gp gems + 200 gp
Parcel 7: 500 gp gem + 800 gp
Parcel 8: 1,100 gp
Parcel 9: Eleven 100 gp gems
Parcel 10: Three 250 gp art objects + two *potions of healing*
Parcel 11: 600 gp
Parcel 12: Four 100 gp gems
Parcel 13: One 250 gp art object + 50 gp
Parcel 14: *Wicked Fang**
Parcel 15: *Figurine of wondrous power: elderwood falcon**
Parcel 16: *Figurine of wondrous power: ironwood hound**

* See "Appendix II, New Items," page 96.

Starting the Adventure

The adventure begins after the PCs return to Overlook following the events of "The Lost Mines of Karak." Though a sense of urgency should prevail once things get underway, there is no set time frame for the messenger to arrive from Brindol. In particular, if the PCs are behind their expected XP totals (each character should be at about the mid-point of 7th level going into this adventure), feel free to run a side trek adventure to get them to where they need to be.

Message from Brindol

The adventure begins when a messenger from Brindol arrives in Overlook searching for the PCs. The messenger, a young human woman named Alys, arrived in Overlook a day before. Unfortunately, when she sought the PCs out through the city watch, her queries also reached the ears of the Lost Ones (see "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," page 15, and "Shadow Rift of Umbraforge," page 9).

Alys's arrival was unfortunately timed. Mere days ago, a bounty was placed on the PCs by Sarshan, the shadar-kai arms dealer the party dealt with in "The Shadow Rift of Umbraforge." Sensing opportunity, the Lost Ones have kidnapped the messenger, hoping to glean information from her that might allow them to get the advantage over the PCs.

When the players are ready to begin, read the following.

The day is dreary, the sky threatening rain. Suddenly a voice calls out behind you, and you turn to see a familiar face.

While the PCs are out in the city, they run into either Kalad (the dwarf paladin from "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" and "Lost Mines of Karak") or Reniss (the half-elf ranger they met in "Shadow Rift of Umbraforge"). After initial greetings, the NPC passes on the following information.

"Word on the street is that someone's looking for you. A messenger from Brindol. She was in the market, asking everyone in earshot if they knew you. She said her name was Alys, sounded desperate."

Settling Old Scores

If the PCs tussled with the Lost Ones in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the kidnapping marks the party's third encounter with the members of that underworld guild. Those previous encounters (and the drubbing the Lost Ones likely received at the PCs hands) have left them hungry for revenge. One of the guild's underbosses, a human named Szagyn, assumes that Alys is a compatriot of the PCs, and hopes to use what she knows to gain the advantage.

If the PCs' previous skirmishes with the Lost Ones were particularly memorable (and especially if you added additional run-ins between the party and the guild), feel free to play up this encounter as a kind of final showdown. If the PCs are unlucky in the skill challenge below, the Lost Ones gain unexpected allies—a group of mysterious killers targeting the PCs.

The Death Squad

In "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the PCs might have tussled with a murderous group featuring two doppelgangers. In the aftermath, they likely discovered a note with the names of a number of adventurers, including four of the party. These death squads are actually agents hired by Sarshan with a specific goal: hunting down and slaying professional adventurers that might interfere with his plans. Following his encounter with the PCs in the Shadowfell, Sarshan dispatched one of his most powerful death squads to hunt down and slay them. Thus far, the PCs have eluded them, but should the party fail the following skill challenge, they must face both the Lost Ones and the death squad simultaneously.

If the PCs do face the death squad in the temple of Pelor, they find another list among the doppelgangers' belongings, this time with detailed descriptions of the PCs, sketches, and extensive notes on the party's exploits. Though this does not tell them who hired the death squad, the note combined with the news of the bounty on their heads should be a strong indicator that someone is out to get them.

Finding the Messenger **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 1,500

By a combination of investigation and stealth, you must track the kidnapped messenger across the city.

As the PCs attempt to find Alys, the messenger from Brindol, they discover that she has been kidnapped by agents of the Lost Ones.

Because the PCs do not immediately know that Alys has been kidnapped, this information is revealed after their first success in the skill challenge. Have an NPC the PCs are interacting with report the following:

"Alys you say? That girl from Brindol, said she was looking for them that put down the orc raid? She passed this way an hour ago, but I saw her go off with some of them Lost Ones. They seemed a little too happy to see her, if you know what I mean."

Complexity
5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Insight, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise, Thievery.

Other Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy

Victory
If the PCs achieve 12 successes before 3 failures, they discover that Alys is being held in an abandoned temple of Pelor in the Nine Bells district, and they are able to make their way there without drawing attention to themselves.

Defeat
If the PCs get 3 failures before 12 successes, they discover where Alys is being held, but their actions bring them to the attention of Sarshan's death squad. In the "Kidnappers" encounter (page 71), the PCs face two separate groups and a much tougher challenge.

Special
Some of the skill checks below have specific requirements that must be met before a PC can make them. For example, the PCs must use Streetwise to track down a Lost Ones operative in order to use Intimidate. Making Intimidate checks against random people on the street yields no information.

Insight (DC 14)
The PC draws on his or her previous experiences fighting the Lost Ones to intuit the group's revenge motive against the PCs, or to determine where in the city Lost Ones agents are most likely to be found.

Intimidate (DC 14)
After locating a Lost Ones operative or ally with a Streetwise check, the PC can seek answers by force.

Perception (DC 14)
The PC spots evidence of the Lost Ones' passage along the route where Alys was taken—a scrap of parchment with the PCs' names on it, reeking muddy bootprints that indicate the kidnappers have recently spent time in Nine Bells, and so on.

Stealth (DC 19)
The PC eavesdrops on merchants, beggars, and other denizens of the streets in order to pick up information that those afraid of the Lost Ones will not reveal directly.

Streetwise (DC 14)
The PC keeps his ear to the ground, picking up information from his contacts within the city. In addition, a successful Streetwise check is necessary before the party can make an Intimidate or Thievery check.

Thievery (DC 19)
After locating a Lost Ones' meeting place with a successful Streetwise check, the PC uncovers details of the kidnapping.

Bluff or **Diplomacy** (DC 14)
By interacting with merchants, street urchins, or associates of the Lost Ones, the PC helps to narrow down the search. With a successful check, the PC gains a +2 bonus on his or her next Insight, Perception, or Streetwise check.

Gilgathorn's Warning

Before the PCs enter the temple of Pelor to deal with Szagyn and the other kidnappers, they encounter an elf by the name of Gilgathorn. This encounter can take place at any point during the skill challenge, as you see fit.

At a natural break in the action, read the following:

"I'd be careful if I were you," calls a voice from above. Looking up, you see a heavily armed elf sitting casually on the slanted eaves above the door of a nearby building. The elf wears a patch across one eye, appraising you carefully with the other. "The Lost Ones aren't going to be gentle when you find them. They've got reason enough to kill you, even if you didn't have a bounty on your head."

The elf introduces himself as Gilgathorn, "Thorn to my friends." He calls himself a mercenary by trade, but in truth, he is a bounty hunter. Like the Lost Ones, he has discovered that the PCs have had a large bounty placed on their heads. However, knowing the party's reputation, he has no intention of confronting them openly. Thorn shows up later in the adventure, first in Brindol, then in Fortress Graystone where he finally makes his move.

Though the PCs might be initially suspicious of Thorn, he is sincere in wanting to make sure the party survives the encounter with the Lost Ones (though only to prevent them from claiming the bounty themselves). Thorn confirms for the PCs that the Lost Ones are behind Alys's disappearance, and that they seek revenge for their previous defeats at the party's hands. Assuming her to be an accomplice of the PCs, the Lost Ones plan to interrogate her in order to obtain information on the party's movements, then to set up an ambush.

Thorn tells the PCs that the bounty on their heads is the hefty sum of 1,000 gp, and that the identity of the person wanting them dead remains as yet unknown. However, while it is true that the Lost Ones have no idea who they work for, the canny Thorn has already connected the bounty with Sarshan.

If the PCs ask Thorn how he knows these things, he simply smiles and tells them he keeps his ear to the ground, like them. If they need further convincing, allow them to confirm what Thorn tells them with subsequent checks in the skill challenge.

Thorn intends to secretly follow the PCs to the Lost Ones' hideout in Nine Bells, watching in order to size them up. However, if the PCs have trouble in that encounter (most likely because the failed skill challenge increases the odds against them), you can

have Thorn step in to aid them. Though his goal is to slay the PCs at a point when their resources have been depleted, he is too smart to do so within the city.

The Abandoned Temple of Pelor

The temple of Pelor is part of the Divine Knot, the cluster of nine temples that give the Nine Bells district its name. Abandoned for years, the temple has been taken over by the sacrilegious Lost Ones as a secret meeting place where they can avoid the attention of the city watch.

Tactical Encounter: "Kidnappers" (page 71).

Return to Brindol

With the Lost Ones defeated and Alys rescued, the PCs learn the reason for the messenger's search. Though she was beaten by the Lost Ones, Alys is strong, and she recovers herself quickly when she realizes who the PCs are. She explains that she has been a messenger in Elsir Vale for many years, and has run into trouble more than once in her career.

Alys speaks with the measured countenance of someone reciting a memorized message. "Greetings from Sertanian, castellan of the Hall of Great Valor. I beseech you to return to Brindol with all haste, as your presence is needed here. The matter concerns one of the relics that you recovered while saving myself and our town's other captives in Rivenroar, and is most urgent."

Sertanian appeared in "Rescue at Rivenroar," and the PCs should remember him well. If he did not survive that adventure, the message is from his apprentice Aeomon, who inherited responsibility for the Hall of Great Valor after his master's death.

Alys knows nothing more than what she has been told, though she confides to the party that she has never seen old Sertanian as fearful as when he sent her forth. The PCs have time to tie up any loose ends in Overlook before they depart for Brindol with Alys as escort.

Warning on the Road

The journey from Overlook to Brindol is relatively uneventful. However, as they approach the point where the Dwarf Road meets the Old North Road at the foot of Lake Restin, the PCs encounters a band of soldiers on patrol. They are stopped for questioning, their names quickly recognized if they give them.

The leader of the patrol identifies himself as Zoram Splintershield, a dwarf whose folk dwell in the foothills of the Giant's Shield. He and his troop are patrolling the roads around the lake and the Blackfens. Zoram tells the PCs that in the past few weeks, there have been a number of unprovoked attacks and abductions in the north of Elsir Vale. Though patrols like his scour the roads in search of these bandits, they have so far come up empty.

Moreover, Zoram informs the PCs that the abductions seem to be perpetrated by gnolls, who have traditionally stayed well clear of the vale. The PCs have heard or seen no sign of gnolls during their time on the road. As such, Zoram bids them a safe journey to Brindol, but warns them to keep a wary eye out for any trouble.

Arrival at Brindol

The journey to Brindol takes a little over a week. Arriving late at night, the PCs find the Hall of Valor closed up tight, Alys telling them that Sertanian will likely already be in bed at his home outside of town. However, the party's arrival is noted by a family member of one of the captives rescued from Rivenroar. The PCs are invited to dinner and offered comfortable lodging. While speaking with their hosts, they learn the following.

"Things have been quiet in Brindol since that awful business, all thanks to your brave efforts, again and always. Still, there's families packing up and taking to the road, more and more each week. There's talk of gnolls attacking settlements in the north, and word of the orcs rising up in the Stonehome. Dark days are coming, or so it seems."

The Hall of Great Valor

The next morning, the PCs make their way to the Hall of Great Valor to meet Sertanian. This adventure assumes that the PCs had the opportunity to see the hall at some point during "Rescue at Rivenroar." If not, paraphrase the following.

The Hall of Great Valor is as you last saw it, its glass cases lining the walls with relics of Elsir Vale's past. Three freestanding displays show off artifacts of the vanquished Red Hand of Doom, a large map of the surrounding lands updated with details of the Hand's most recent forays against Elsir Vale and its people.

Where he dusts relics in a display case across the room, a familiar grey-haired figure rises. Sertanian smoothes out his stained smock as he bows. "My friends," he says. "Welcome back to Brindol."

Sertanian thanks the PCs for their quick arrival, but any Insight check reveals the castellan's unease. Only after locking the doors of the hall will he tell the party why he has summoned them here.

"You recall the platinum blade that was one of the treasures taken by Sinruth and his hobgoblin horde. Upon its return to the hall, it seemed none the worse for its ordeal. It is a relic of some worth and sentimental value, but holds no magic that I or any of my predecessors here have noted. But then a week ago, while working late at night, I heard a voice, calling me. From its case, the sword spoke to me, beseeching me to summon heroes to its aid. It asked for all of you by name."

Sertanian explains that after the sword began speaking, he removed it from its display case and hid it in the hall's back room. He leads the PCs to a cluttered workspace, where the platinum longsword lies beneath a cloth on a table. When the cloth is removed, read the following.

Without warning, the small workroom is filled with a woman's voice, weak. "You have come, my heroes, but my thanks must be brief. I am Amyria, and I have summoned you here from great need. I know it must seem strange to hear me speak, but I assure you that this form is only temporary. It is for that reason that I beseech you for your aid.

"Decades ago, a race of monastics born of the Elemental Chaos established a fortress in Elsir Vale. These were the githzerai, who lived secretly in their remote outpost before suddenly vanishing. Their Fortress of Graystone was well hidden, and remained uninhabited for long years.

"Some months ago, Fortress Graystone was invaded and claimed by a pack of gnoll mercenaries calling themselves the Wicked Fang. Their leader, a sadistic follower of the demon lord Yeenoghu, has begun to send his raiders out into Elsir Vale and beyond. In recent weeks, this gnoll chieftain Fangren has managed to open a conduit of power to Yeenoghu's realm in the Elemental Chaos. He plans to claim some small fragment of the demon lord's power, transforming himself into an exarch of the Beast of Butchery. It was the creation of this conduit that awoke me from my age-long slumber.

"If Fangren completes his ritual, demonic forces will have gained a foothold in the mortal realm. More importantly, that conduit to the Elemental Chaos can be manipulated through a ritual that I will provide to you. This is the boon that I pray you grant me. Bring me to Fortress Graystone and free me from this prison."

The sword explains that it can provide directions to Fortress Graystone, and that it will answer any questions as best it can.

What will the ritual you are giving us do? "The ritual will free me from my current form, restoring me to my rightful body. I can say no more than that. Though I am granted the power to speak to you, my memory has been fractured by long years of sleep."

Why does the ritual have to be performed in Fortress Graystone? "In opening the conduit to the Elemental Chaos, Fangren unwittingly set the stage for my restoration. The ritual will alter the conduit such that it can channel energy from other planes to fuel my transformation."

What about the gnolls? "The Wicked Fang tribe is not to be underestimated. They are strong and steeped in demon worship. While making your way to the fortress will almost certainly be dangerous, the threat to Elsir Vale and the wider world is great."

What else do you know about Fortress Graystone? "The fortress is built into the side of a peak of the Giant's Shield. No roads or trails travel to the fortress, so the journey will be arduous."

Can you tell us what we will find at the fortress? "Alas, I cannot. When the rift was opened, Fangren's thoughts and plans came to me as in a dream that woke my own mind. I have not seen him since, and

my spirit grows weaker with every hour that passes. Before long, I fear that my voice and thought will be lost once more."

At a natural break in the exchange between Amyria and the PCs, trouble arrives in the form of bounty hunters intent on collecting the price on the PCs' heads. The bounty hunter Thorn puts in an appearance, and is there to speak to the PCs in the aftermath.

Tactical Encounter: "The Hall of Great Valor" (page 73).

Departing Brindol

The attack by the bounty hunters should reinforce the warning Thorn gave the PCs in Overlook. The elf tells the PCs that he is as surprised to find them there as they are to see him. He speaks of how he was passing through Brindol on his way to a job in Marthton when he saw the burning hall and came to lend what assistance he could. He also adds that before he left Overlook, he heard rumors of the PCs' confrontation with the Lost Ones, and that the bounty on their heads had been doubled in the aftermath.

Thorn's story is, of course, a lie. He followed the bounty hunters to Brindol in the hope that they would kill the PCs, after which he would slay them and take the credit for himself. At the very least, he expected the fight to weaken the PCs enough for him to take them on, but the party's prowess in battle has proved even more formidable than he expected.

Having been eavesdropping outside the Hall of Great Valor, Thorn knows all that the PCs know of Amyria and her quest. His plan now is to get to Fortress Graystone ahead of the party, setting traps along the way as a means of forcing them to expend resources. By chance, Thorn has been inside Fortress Graystone, and he knows a great deal about its defenses.

Amyria's Plight

When the sword spoke to the PCs in the Hall of Great Valor, they noted the weakness of its voice. If and when the PCs attempt to speak to Amyria en route to Fortress Graystone, the spirit within the sword reiterates that each time it talks, its waning life force is further diminished. If the PCs have specific questions that Amyria can answer, the sword makes the effort to speak. However, Amyria does not know any information regarding their journey beyond the general route to the fortress that she earlier described.

Travel to Fortress Graystone **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 900

The journey to Fortress Graystone is well off the established trade roads and trails of Elsir Vale. You have many challenges ahead, and you have only yourselves to rely on as you make your way to the stronghold.

In addition to the natural challenges of the trip, the bounty hunter Thorn plans to wear the PCs down during their journey to the citadel, then to kill them there.

The PCs must navigate the hazardous wilderness of the Giant's Shield as they seek Fortress Graystone. However, an unseen foe shadows their route, and is intent on making their journey much more dangerous.

Complexity
3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Athletics, Endurance, History, Nature, Perception.

Other Skills
Perception.

Victory
If the PCs achieve 8 successes before 3 failures, they manage to safely reach Fortress Graystone without a significant loss of resources.

Defeat
If the PCs get 3 failures before 6 successes, they reach Fortress Graystone but their delays and setbacks leave them exhausted. Each PC loses 1 healing surge.

Special
This skill challenge features an enemy actively working against the PCs as they attempt to find their way to Fortress Graystone. The first time the PCs fail an Athletics or Nature check, or if a successful check beats the DC by 5 or more, they see evidence that whatever hazard or pitfall they attempted to avoid has been set up for them by agents unknown. Once the PCs realize that they are being shadowed, they can make secondary Perception checks to be on the lookout for signs of ambush or entrapment.

Athletics (DC 8)
The PC scales a tree or climbs a rock outcropping to spot signs of the path ahead, or to catch a glimpse of Fortress Graystone in the distance.

Endurance (DC 14)
The PCs sleep less, take longer watches, and scout increasingly farther ahead in an attempt to thwart the actions of whoever is stalking them. This check can be made only after the PCs realize that someone is actively seeking to hinder their progress (see "Special," above).
This is a group check. One character acts as lead, while the others make checks to aid that character. Each ally that gets a result of 10 or higher provides a +2 bonus to the lead character's check (which counts as the check to determine a success or a failure).

History (DC 14)
The PC attempts to recall lore regarding the history of Fortress Graystone, identifying major landmarks that help the party find a safe route.

Nature (DC 14)
The PC identifies natural hazards and potential dangers on the journey, finding a route that goes through easier terrain.

Perception (DC 19)
The PC is able to spot hazards and dangers that have been intentionally hidden or created by the unknown forces shadowing the party. A successful Perception check grants a single PC a +2 bonus to his or her next primary skill check made in the challenge.

Fortress Graystone

Fortress Graystone sits built into the side of a low peak of the Giant's Shield mountains. The structure is well hidden from the eyes of the inhabitants of Elsir Vale, as was the intention of its builders. A massive stone staircase leading into the side of the mountain is the only entrance.

Fortress Graystone was constructed by a band of githzerai monastics whose reasons for dwelling in the mortal realm have been lost to history. Later explorers found evidence that the citadel was built as a place of training and meditation for the githzerai, and assumed that its remote location had been chosen for its defensive value. However, what no one realized is that Fortress Graystone was built to defend what lies hidden within it.

In their home in the Elemental Chaos, the githzerai discovered a thinning in the barrier between that plane and the world. Making their way to the world, they searched for and found this planar breach in the Giant's Shield mountains. There, they built a fortress around the point of planar instability, attempting to prevent the damage that might occur to both planes should the breach be fully opened.

Decades ago, the githzerai inhabiting Fortress Graystone vanished without a trace. Recently, Sarshan ordered the gnolls of the Wicked Fang pack to travel here and secure the fortress as part of their deal with the shadar-kai arms dealer. Little did Sarshan know what Fangren would find there. Though he is hardly a scholar, the gnoll shaman obtained knowledge of planar magic that allowed him to tap into the power hidden within the fortress. Now, he seeks to use it for his own dark ends.

When the PCs approach the fortress, read the following.

For the last day, thick forest has been giving way to rolling foothills. Now, the hills rise to a sudden wall of rocky peaks rising high above the trees. A rough gravel path winds its way along the base of the mountains, the first sign of a true trail that you have seen since your departure from Brindol.

The Fortress

Fortress Graystone reflects the aesthetic of the githzerai who built it, demonstrating balance between the chaos of their birthplace and the order they sought to impose upon their own lives.

The fortress takes its name from the distinctive gray stone found in this area of the Giant's Shield, colored that way by prevalent veins of platinum ore. The stone walls of the fortress are decorated with bas reliefs and carvings that have withstood the passage of years with little deterioration. However, the arrival of the Wicked Fang gnolls has changed that.

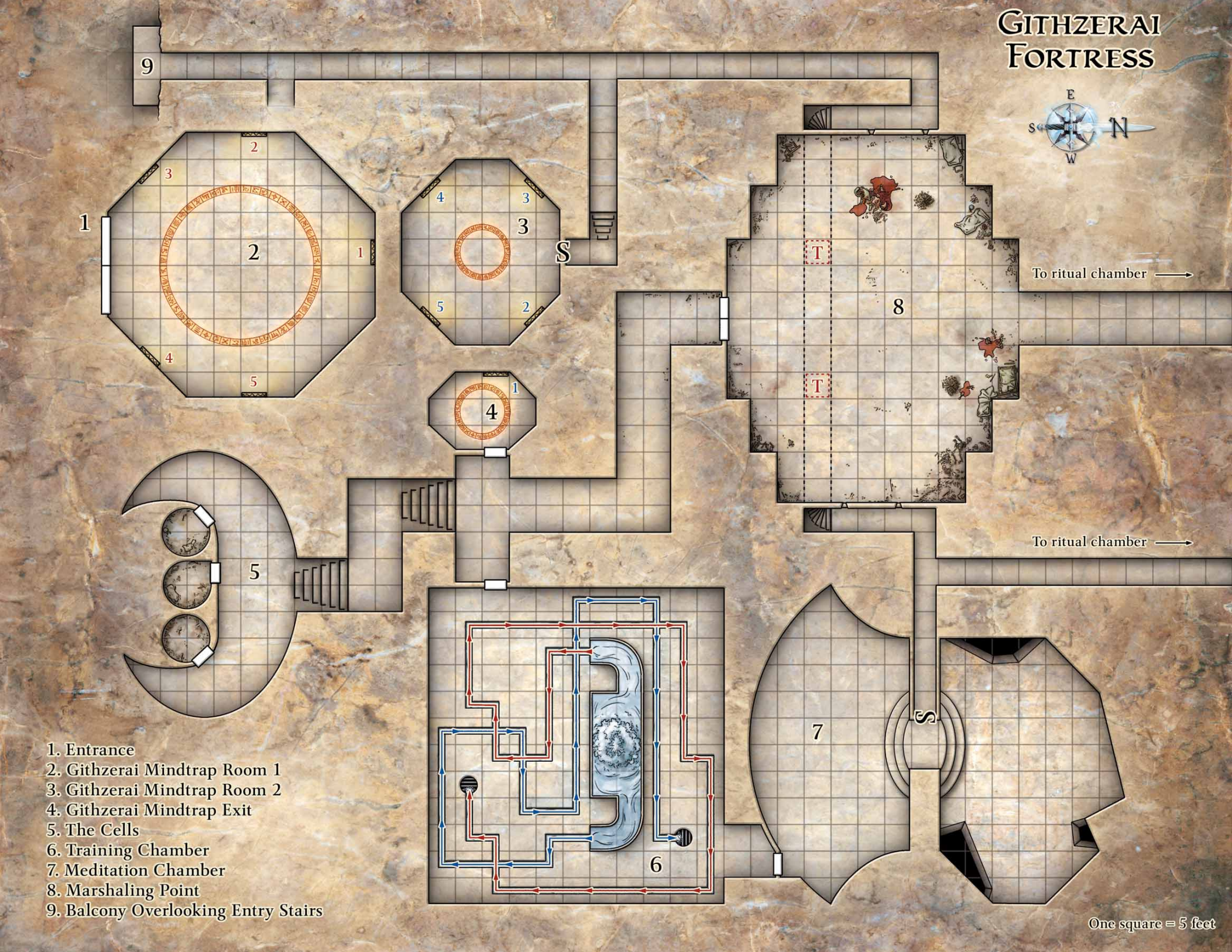
Features of the Fortress

Different areas of Fortress Graystone share the following common features.

Illumination: All rooms within the fortress except the meditation chamber are brightly lit. The secret passages are dark, except for two small areas beneath the open trapdoors at the marshaling point.

Doors: The doors in Fortress Graystone are unlocked, with two exceptions. The door leading from

Githzerai Fortress



1. Entrance
2. Githzerai Mindtrap Room 1
3. Githzerai Mindtrap Room 2
4. Githzerai Mindtrap Exit
5. The Cells
6. Training Chamber
7. Meditation Chamber
8. Marshaling Point
9. Balcony Overlooking Entry Stairs

the marshaling point to the ritual chamber requires a key (possessed only by Fangren) or a DC 14 Thievery check to open. Likewise, the door leading into the marshaling point requires a key (possessed only by the Wicked Fang warmaster and the ruin-touched beastcaller) or a DC 19 Thievery check to open. Doors open inward from the adjacent corridors.

Stairs: The rubble-strewn stairs within the fortress are difficult terrain.

Secret Passages: The githzerai built several secret passages within Fortress Graystone, with entrances in the githzerai mind trap, the meditation chamber, and at the marshaling point. Thorn knows of these passages, and uses them to avoid the effects of the fortress's traps as he reactivates them.

Extended Rests

Fortress Graystone provides few places where the PCs can take an extended rest without having the gnolls regroup to search for them. In the event that the party needs to restore itself, the PCs will need to retreat into the forest outside to do so.

Taking an extended rest allows any gnolls alerted to the PCs' presence to regroup and call for backup. Feel free to use an extended rest as an opportunity for Thorn to attack (see page 77), as well as a chance to set up reinforcement encounters within the citadel. Place these new encounters in areas the PCs have already cleared out, but make sure that such encounters don't overly tax the party's newly replenished resources.

With the PCs 7th or 8th level by now, most reinforcement encounters should be 4th or 5th level—enough to demonstrate the Wicked Fang's resources but not to be a significant drain on the party. (Minions are a great way to fill up a reinforcement encounter.)

When the PCs end their extended rest, let them see or hear reinforcements arriving and entering the citadel. Unless the party wants to deal with the new threat immediately (in which case, you can improvise an encounter outside the fortress entrance), give the PCs time to plan for these additional encounters once they go back inside.

1. The Entrance

The wide stairs rising up the mountainside climb toward a set of double doors flanked by four statues. The Wicked Fang gnolls have set up their first line of defense here.

Tactical Encounter: "The Stairs" (page 75).

2.–4. Githzerai Mind Trap

The mind trap is a special chamber designed by the githzerai to guard the fortress against incursion. This trap consists of a series of linked teleportation portals that shift destinations rapidly, making it impossible to quickly move a large strike force into the fortress. Called a mind trap due to the mental discipline required to pass through it to the interior of the fortress, the portal system was deactivated by Fangren when the gnolls first arrived.

Unfortunately for the gnolls guarding this area, Thorn reactivated the trap before moving deeper into the building, leaving several gnolls stuck trying to find their way out when the PCs arrive.

Tactical Encounter: "Githzerai Mind Trap" (page 79).

5. The Cells

This oddly shaped chamber was once the living quarters of the githzerai. It currently serves as a makeshift prison within which the Wicked Fang pack keeps a handful of prisoners. Fangren has been using these Elsir Vale captives in twisted experiments, transforming them into abyssal wretches.

Tactical Encounter: "The Cells" (page 81).

6. Training Chamber

A waterfall flows into this room from above, driving a system of shallow aqueducts that allowed the githzerai of the fortress to simulate the chaos of battle in their combat training.

This chamber is currently occupied by several ruin-touched gnolls and their slaughterfang hyena mounts. Knowing that the ruin-touched gnolls had undergone horrific rituals to infuse them with demonic power, Fangren called upon them to aid his quest when he first devised his plan to ascend to the status of exarch of Yeenoghu.

Tactical Encounter: "Training Chamber" (page 83).

7. Meditation Chamber

The doors leading into this area are covered with scrawled warnings in Common and Abyssal to stay out. This room is divided into two distinct chambers. The smooth walls of the southern portion are designed to represent the peace of law, while the rough stone of the northern chamber represents the tumult of chaos. Githzerai warriors would meditate here at the boundary between chaos and order.

Spiritual echoes of the githzerai and manifestations of their inner chaos plague this chamber. The gnolls consider it a haunted place, and they will not enter.

Tactical Encounter: "Meditation Chamber" (page 85).

8. Marshaling Point

Once a gathering place for the githzerai, this area has been transformed into a training ground and living space for the gnolls. Debris and refuse litter the floor, while recruits train here under the watchful eye of their pack's warmaster and a shadar-kai agent sent from Sarshan. The doors are locked but the ruin-touched beastcaller (in the training chamber) has a key.

Present in the marshaling point is a shadar-kai weaponmaster by the name of Kyrion. One of Sarshan's most trusted agents, Kyrion has traveled to the world to deliver the sword *Wicked Fang* to the gnolls and to train them in the use of shadar-kai weapons. Kyrion has no loyalty to the Wicked Fang tribe, and fights only to defend himself.

Tactical Encounter: "Marshaling Point" (page 87).

No Prisoners

If Kyrion is killed or flees before the PCs can interrogate him, any search of the chamber finds the following note among his belongings:

Kyrion,

Let me make my orders clear: you are there only to train the gnolls, not to fight for them. Watch yourself; they are a bloodthirsty and violent lot, and they may turn on you. You may need to remind them from time to time that I pay them well for their services, and that I can withdraw my support for their butchery at any time. Be careful of their leader, for he is far more cunning than others would give him credit for. I would not have even considered trying to trick them into service with that "Emissary" deception that riled up that fool Sinruth. These gnolls have the power of their foul god on their side. They are not to be trifled with.

– Sarshan

Sarshan's Plots

Whether Kyrion flees, is slain, or is captured alive, the PCs can discover his connection to the gnolls—and to the party's previous adventures. If he is captured and questioned, Kyrion offers up his story and a pledge to leave Elsir Vale in exchange for his freedom and a weapon to defend himself. Whether Kyrion is interrogated or not, see the skill challenge on the next page. If Kyrion is freed by the PCs, he stays true to his word to leave Elsir Vale.

Interrogating the Weaponmaster **Level 8**
Skill Challenge XP 350

If he survives his encounter with the party, the shadar-kai weaponmaster Kyrion offers the PCs their best chance to uncover the full truth of the plots unfolding around them.

The shadar-kai knows the truth behind the gnolls' plots in Elsir Vale. Now the PCs just need to convince him to talk.

Complexity
1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy, Heal, Insight, Intimidate.

Victory
The PCs learn that Kyrion was sent by Sarshan to train the gnolls in the use of shadar-kai weapons. They also learn that Sarshan is responsible for convincing the gnolls to seize Fortress Graystone and to go on a kidnapping spree across Elsir Vale. Finally, they learn that Sarshan was also responsible for provoking Sinruth into reviving the Red Hand of Doom.

In addition, the PCs learn that the sword wielded by the gnoll warmaster is a unique weapon, crafted specifically for the Wicked Fang pack on Sarshan's orders. According to Kyrion, Wicked Fang—so named in honor of Fangren's pack—is said to carry a curse and have a history steeped in blood.

Defeat
If the PCs fail the skill challenge, Kyrion still imparts the knowledge from the first paragraph above, but not the second paragraph, hoping the PCs will overlook the importance of the weapon.

Bluff (DC 14)
The PC attempts to trick Kyrion into thinking that Fangren has betrayed him, hoping that the shadar-kai will betray the gnolls in turn.

Diplomacy (DC 14)
The PC earns Kyrion's respect by praising the shadar-kai's battle prowess.

Heal (DC 8)
The PC binds Kyrion's wounds, earning his grudging gratitude by ensuring that he will live to fight again.

Insight (DC 19)
By listening to and watching the shadar-kai, the PC intuits some aspect of his true relationship with the gnolls.

Intimidate (DC 19)
The PC manages to break Kyrion's resolve with base threats of violence.

Ritual Chamber

The ritual chamber was built around the planar rift discovered within the mountain by the githzerai. Using dark rituals stolen from his ruin-touched allies, Fangren has corrupted the energy of this place, creating a conduit to the Elemental Chaos and the power of the demon lord Yeenoghu.

Shadar-kai Weapons

Their shadar-kai weapons give the gnolls an advantage in their raids, but these blades require the special training Kyrion provides. The shadar-kai short sword is statistically identical to the katar (*PH* 218), while the shadar-kai greatsword is statistically identical to the fullblade (*Adventurer's Vault* 9). Though the weapons have a jagged and shadowy appearance, this provides no additional mechanical benefit.

Unlike with most planar portals, physical objects and creatures cannot pass through the conduit, which serves only to draw energy into the mortal realm. This planar energy is critical to Fangren's dream of ascending to exarch status, as well as to Amyria's ritual.

Tactical Encounter: "Ritual Chamber" (page 89).

Amyria's Ritual

With the conduit safely closed and the threat of Fangren and his allies ended, the platinum sword from Brindol begins to speak once more. The voice sounds even weaker, its life force all but spent as it instructs the PCs to draw it and perform its ritual. If one of the PCs has the Ritual Caster feat, the sword directs its instructions to that character. Otherwise, any PC can perform the ritual under the sword's direction. The ritual takes 10 minutes.

A vortex of brilliant energy opens up in the air as the platinum sword is gently tugged from your hands. It rises to hover in the air before the newly formed conduit, tendrils of silver light reaching out to touch it. You are blinded by a brilliant flash, then an instant later, the ritual chamber falls silent.

Standing before you is a young human female of unearthly beauty and grace. Her silver hair hangs down her back, a band of chalk-white pigment stretching from one temple to the other across her eyes. She is garbed in armor made of slender, overlapping plates. In one hand, she holds a leather-bound tome; in the other, the platinum longsword.

"I am Amyria," she says. "Who are you, and why am I here?"

The ritual has transformed the spirit within the platinum longsword into Amyria, a being who is far more than she appears. However, much to her own consternation, Amyria is not fully certain why she has been brought here. She does not recognize the PCs or their names, and has no memory of her words to them while her spirit lingered within the sword.

"I remember that I am Amyria," she says softly, "and I have lived many lives. I was in the sword. I remember you freed me. The ritual you performed transformed the planar breach in this place, allowing it to channel the energy of the Astral Sea. Energy necessary for my transformation." She looks to you, eyes bright. "I have been reborn with purpose, even if that purpose is yet unclear to me."

Beyond her minimal recollections, Amyria is a clean slate—her transformation a literal rebirth. Though she is of an adult mindset, she knows nothing of her own past.

The leather-bound tome is a ritual book that Amyria gives to the party with her thanks. It contains a modified version of the ritual just performed, allowing them to stop the flow of energy that fuels a planar portal.

Seal Portal

You close a portal between two locations safely, ensuring that nothing can come through it in the future.

Level: 8
Category: Binding
Time: 10 Minutes
Duration: Permanent
Component Cost: 100 gp
Market Price: 680 gp
Key Skill: Arcana

You sever the magical connections that bind one place to another by way of a portal. The completion of this ritual successfully shuts a currently active portal and seals it. No creature, object, or energy can pass through a sealed portal. The portal is not destroyed, though it becomes both invisible and intangible, meaning that it cannot be perceived or interacted with while sealed. If the portal would normally disappear after a certain amount of time, it does so.

At the completion of this ritual, make an Arcana check. A sealed portal can be reopened with the *linked portal*, *planar portal*, or *true portal* rituals, but the creature performing the ritual to reopen the portal must make an Arcana check that equals or exceeds the results of the Arcana check you made when performing this ritual. You can remove the seal on a portal you have sealed by performing this ritual on it again.

The magic of a sealed portal can be detected with the Arcana skill. The level of the magical phenomenon (the seal, not the portal itself) is equal to your level at the time you performed this ritual.

Amyria, Scion of Bahamut

The following statistics for Amyria represent her current form. Though this concludes this adventure (and Amyria will be going her own way once the PCs reach Overlook), DMs can use these statistics as both a point of reference and an NPC statistics block in case a particular campaign calls for it.

Amyria **Level 10 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid XP 1,000
Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +10
Aura of Recovery aura 2; allies that start their turn in Amyria's aura gain a +1 bonus to all saves until the start of their next turn.
HP 200; **Bloodied** 100
AC 24; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23
Resist radiant 10
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage plus 1d6 radiant damage.
⸸ **Crusader's Assault** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
Requires longsword; +15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage plus 1d6 radiant damage, and one of Amyria's allies within 10 squares makes a basic attack as a free action against the same target.
✧ **Radiant Rebuke** (immediate interrupt; when targeted by a melee attack; at-will)
Close burst 1; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 radiant damage.
Memory of A Thousand Lifetimes (free; encounter)
Amyria adds 1d6 to a d20 roll she just made.
Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills Diplomacy +13, Religion +15
Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+6) **Wis** 21 (+10)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 18 (+9) **Cha** 16 (+8)

Instructions from Sarshan

When the PCs search Fangren's body, they find a series of notes and missives from Sarshan to the gnoll chieftain. They relay orders to the Wicked Fang pack, including the following.

I cannot stress the importance of holding Fortress Graystone. Among the assignments I have given you, this should be your top priority. I have armed you well enough that you should be able to repel all invaders.

Do what you will with your prisoners, but continue taking them. Focus your efforts on those who seem to be of some importance; do not waste your time with farmers and commoners.

I am sending someone to train your recruits in the use of our weapons, at your request. However, I expect you to leave this one alone. The witch I sent to you was one of my personal advisors, and now she is ruined. Do not treat my people so callously as you do your own.

Concluding the Adventure

Having rid Fortress Graystone of the Wicked Fang pack, performed the ritual to transform the platinum sword into Amyria, and sealed the conduit to the planes, the PCs have finished their mission and can depart at their leisure. As they exit the fortress, Amyria requests that they accompany her to Overlook, not back to Brindol, as she believes she has business there. Should the PCs resist, she will not put up a fight, though she will set off for the city without them should they choose to go elsewhere.

Eventually, however, the PCs need to return to Overlook. Not only is this the starting point of the next adventure, it is (as the PCs will soon discover) a critical location in a war that expands far beyond what they suspect. If the PCs accompany Amyria to Overlook, she bids them farewell once they reach the entrance to the city, slipping away into the crowd. If any of the party should attempt to follow her, she goes to the Temple of Ioun in the Nine Bells district. There, she immediately becomes lost in prayer, lingering indefinitely.

Return to the Shadowfell

At the conclusion of this adventure, the PCs have learned that Sarshan stands at the center of many of their recent adventures. It is understandable that the PCs might be inclined to head straight to the Shadowfell in order to deal with the shadar-kai. However, if you wish to allow such action, be aware that the PCs won't face the arms dealer directly until a later adventure.

When the PCs arrive at Umbraforge, they discover the tower's windows dark and the entire complex seemingly abandoned. The tent camps at the foot of Sarshan's tower remain intact and inhabited, but the only shadar-kai who remain were not in Sarshan's service. They can tell the PCs that, shortly after their departure, Sarshan and his entire organization departed from Umbraforge for parts unknown. With no knowledge of where Sarshan went, this should put the PCs off his trail, for a while at least.

KIDNAPPERS

Encounter Level 9 (2,150 XP)
Encounter Level 11 (3,050 XP)*

Setup

4 Lost One kidnappers (K)
2 ravenous attack dogs (R)
Szagyn, Lost One underboss (U)
3 death squad assassins (A)*

* Only if the PCs failed the "Finding the Messenger" skill challenge.

After completing the skill challenge, the PCs make their way to the abandoned temple of Pelor where the messenger from Brindol is being held by the Lost Ones.

When the PCs approach the temple, read:

As you enter Nine Bells, the rain that has been threatening all day begins to fall. By the time you locate the temple of Pelor, the streets are all but empty, the inhabitants of the district fled to shelter. From the outside, the temple entrance is set above a short flight of stone stairs. The flare of lightning shows where relief carvings once adorned the temple's outer walls, but these are unrecognizable after years of neglect and abuse.

When the PCs enter, read:

Water covers the cracked marble floor where broken freestanding frescoes block four doors in the far wall. Rain pours down through a square opening in the ceiling, shards of stained glass clinging to its edges. Beneath it, a young woman in tattered traveling garb has been gagged, blindfolded, and bound to a wooden chair.

Perception Check
DC 14: *Well-gnawed bones spread across the room and the reek of wet fur suggest the presence of dogs somewhere within the temple.*
DC 19: *A flash of lightning through the open ceiling reveals faint movement behind the frescoes, figures lurking there.*

A sentry at the door alerted the Lost Ones to the PCs' approach, giving them time to bind and gag Alys and get into position behind the frescoes.

4 Lost One Kidnappers (K) **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 79; **Bloodied** 39
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 6
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage
↓ **Grab and Go** (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the Lost One kidnapper slides 2 squares, then slides the target 2 squares. The target must end its slide adjacent to the kidnapper's new position.
Kidnap (free; encounter)
When the Lost One kidnapper hits a target with its Grab and Go ability, the distance both creatures slide is increased to 4 squares.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 9 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, long sword

2 Ravenous Attack Dogs (R) **Level 7 Skirmisher**
Small natural beast XP 300
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16
Speed 6
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+12 vs. AC; 1d4 + 7 damage
↓ **Tripping Lunge** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.
↓ **Drag off Prey** (immediate interrupt; when an adjacent opponent moves away; at-will)
+10 vs. Fortitude; 1d4 + 3 damage, and the ravenous attack dog slides 1 square, then slides the target 1 square. The target must end its slide adjacent to the attack dog's new position.
Circle for the Kill (move; at-will)
The ravenous attack dog shifts 2 squares.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Intimidate +6
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Lost One Underboss (U) **Level 8 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 350
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7
Underboss's Presence aura 2; at the start of each ally's turn, if that ally is within the aura and the Lost One underboss's line of sight, the ally gains 4 temporary hit points.
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Speed 6
⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage
✲ **Storm of Daggers** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires a number of daggers equal to number of enemies in burst; area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies the Lost One Underboss can see; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 damage.
Get Into Position (minor 1/round; at-will)
One ally within 10 squares shifts 1 square.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Bluff +12, Intimidate +12, Stealth +11
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 17 (+7)
Equipment leather armor, 18 daggers

3 Death Squad Assassins (A)		Level 7 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)		XP 300
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +6	
HP 61; **Bloodied** 30		
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19		
Speed 6		
⨭ **Assassin's Longblade** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage.		
⨭ **Shapeshifter Feint** (minor; at-will)		
+10 vs. Reflex; the death squad assassin gains combat advantage against the target until the end of the death squad assassin's next turn.		
⨭ **Assassin's Quarry** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**		
+10 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 8 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).		
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**		
A doppelganger can alter its physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (*MM* 280).		
Combat Advantage		
The death squad assassin deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common	
Skills Bluff +10, Insight +11, Stealth +12		
Str 10 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+7)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 13 (+4)	**Int** 13 (+4)	**Cha** 14 (+5)
Equipment dark robes, assassin's longblade		

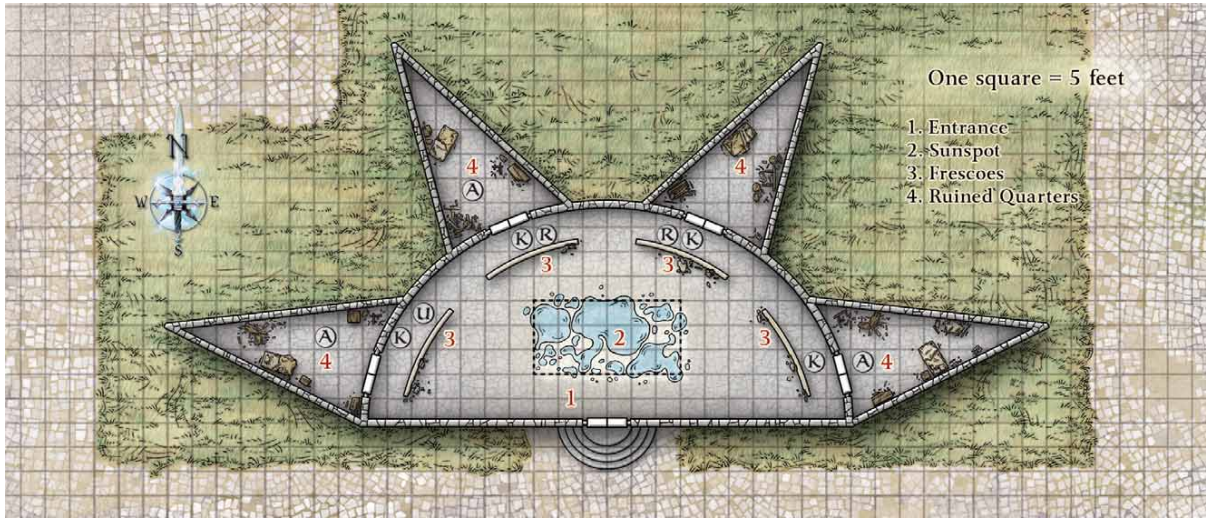
Tactics

Unless they are spotted, the Lost Ones hold their attacks until at least half the PCs are inside the temple.

The kidnappers use their *grab and go* power against lightly armored PCs or ranged attackers, pulling targets behind the frescoes and into melee range.

Szagyn stays in the thick of combat, using *storm of daggers* as often as possible and making dagger attacks while that power recharges.

The ravenous attack dogs target PCs at the periphery of combat, harrying melee combatants with *tripping lunge* and using *drag off prey* to keep their foes close.



If the death squad assassins appear in this encounter, they enter combat in the third round, having followed the PCs on their search for Alys. The doppelgangers focus *assassin's quarry* attacks against the strongest-looking melee combatants, making *assassin's longblade* attacks against lightly-armored PCs while *assassin's quarry* recharges.

The doppelgangers are not allies of the Lost Ones, but they know that the guild fears them. The Lost Ones and the doppelgangers do not target each other, but they do not treat each other as allies.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light through the open ceiling. The triangular chambers beyond the doors are dark.

Doors: The double doors at the front of the temple are swollen and warped, requiring a DC 14 Strength check to pull open. The doors leading to the triangular chambers open easily.

Pooled Water: Most of the rain coming in through the hole in the ceiling disappears through cracks in the stone floor. However, the area directly beneath the hole is slick with pooled water and is difficult terrain.

Frescoes: Numerous holes have been punched through these damaged frescoes. They provide cover to creatures standing at their corners, or total cover to creatures behind them.

The Hall of Great Valor

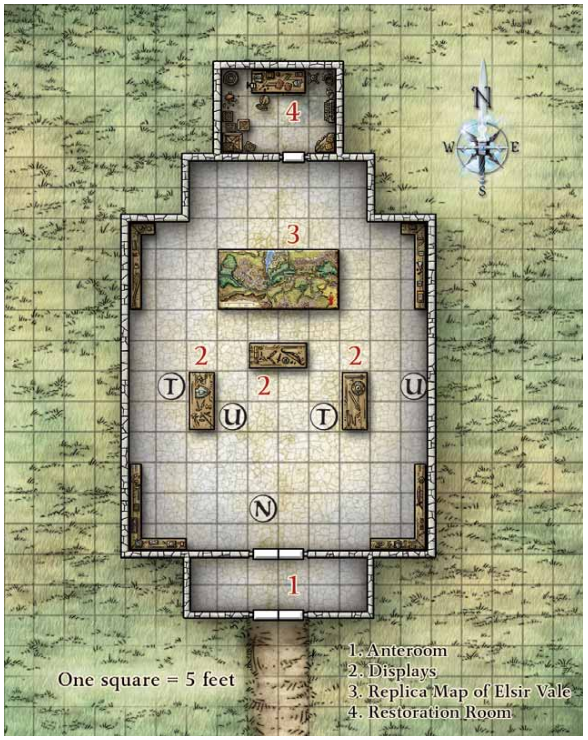
Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

Setup

1 bounty hunter snaremaster (N)
2 bounty hunter strongarms (T)
2 bounty hunter subduers (U)

A band of bounty hunters from Overlook catches up to the PCs at the Hall of Great Valor. A halfling snaremaster, two dwarf strongarms, and two human subduers are spoiling for a fight after their long journey from Overlook, and they will go to any lengths to collect their reward.

Near the end of the encounter (or sooner if the PCs are having a tough time), Thorn appears to provide assistance. If the PCs are having an easy time in the fight, have one or more of the bounty hunters attempt to flee only to be taken out by Thorn waiting at the door. Award the PCs full experience, however. For more information, see "Departing Brindol," below.



At a break in the PCs' questioning of Amyria, read:

A sudden crash from the hall outside is punctuated by an explosion of fire. A burning bottle has been lobbed through one of the hall's windows, shattering to spread flaming liquid across tables and display cases. A moment later, the locked front door is kicked open, a squad of armed figures bursting in.

Bounty Hunter Snaremaster (N) Level 7 Artillery
Small natural humanoid, halfling XP 300
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 61; **Bloodied** 30
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 6
Rapier (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.
Bolas (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is restrained (save ends).
Keep 'Em Separated (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires bolas; ranged 10/20; three targets in range; +10 vs. Reflex; 4d4 + 5 damage, and the target slides 2 squares and is restrained (save ends).
Second Chance (immediate interrupt; when the bounty hunter snaremaster would be hit by an attack; encounter)
The bounty hunter snaremaster forces the attacker to reroll the attack and take the new result.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, rapier, 6 bolas

2 Bounty Hunter Subduers (U) Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 300
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38
AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 6
Maul (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.
Knockout Blow (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires maul; +10 vs. Fortitude; 4d6 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).
Combat Advantage
The bounty hunter subduer deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Nature +10
Str 18 (+7) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, maul

2 Bounty Hunter Strongarms (T) Level 7 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 300
Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 98; **Bloodied** 49
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19
Speed 5
Greataxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage.
Clear The Area (standard; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greataxe; close burst 1; +8 vs. AC; 2d12 + 10 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.
Brute Rush
When a bounty hunter strongarm makes a bull rush attack, he pushes the target 2 squares instead of 1 square.
Stand Your Ground
When an effect forces the bounty hunter strongarm to move—through a push, a pull, or a slide—the bounty hunter strongarm moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the bounty hunter strongarm prone, the bounty hunter strongarm can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, greataxe

Tactics

The bounty hunters have no interest in the history of the Hall of Great Valor, and even less compunction against destroying it as they target the PCs.

The bounty hunter subduers use their *knockout blow* as often as possible, flanking with maul attacks for combat advantage while that power recharges.

The snaremaster targets powerful-looking melee combatants with *keep 'em separated* or individual bola attacks, hoping to keep PCs out of the fight.

The strongarms stay in the thick of melee to maximize the use of their *clear the area* power. They make bull rush attacks with *brute rush* to keep the PCs in motion, giving the subduers room to maneuver.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light throughout

Burning Floor: The wooden floors of the Hall of Great Valor become hazardous as the fire spreads. Start the fire in a square of your choice. Each round that it burns (until the PCs successfully complete the "Dousing the Flames" skill challenge), the fire spreads into an additional 1d4 squares at random. See the skill challenge and the hazard statistics block for more information.

Freestanding Displays: These tall slabs of solid stone support artifacts relating to the incursions of the Red Hand of Doom. The displays provide cover. Clambering over a display costs 1 extra square of movement.

Map of Elsir Vale: This three-dimensional model represents the Elsir Vale region and depicts the major sites of battles against the Red Hand of Doom. It initially provides cover. However, the map and its underlying table are fragile, and will collapse if any creature attempts to clamber over it or if it takes more than 10 points of damage from area attacks. Once it collapses, the map and its table count as difficult terrain.

Dousing the Flames

Even as they fight, the PCs must deal with the fire spreading within the Hall of Great Valor. This skill challenge allows the PCs to get the fire under control before the hall is consumed.

Setup: The Hall of Great Valor is burning, and you must work fast if you hope to save it.

Level: 6 (250 XP)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Athletics, Perception, Thievery.

Special: The PCs do not earn failures in the skill challenge for failing a skill check. Instead, they accrue 1 failure at the end of any round in which no success was gained. When the top of the initiative order comes up, the failure occurs before the first creature's turn.

In addition to the checks below, a success in the skill challenge is gained by a PC who targets 1 or more squares of burning floor with a power that deals any amount of cold damage.

Athletics (DC 8): With a show of strength, the PC tips over a display case to smother the flames.

Perception (DC 14): The PC determines which way the flames are spreading, and can direct his or her allies' efforts in that direction.

Thievery (DC 14): The PC pries up burning floorboards, creating gaps so the flames cannot spread any further. On a failed check, the PC takes 1d6 fire damage.

Success: If the PCs achieve 4 successes before 3 failures, they manage to keep the museum from burning down, preserving the heritage of the people of Brindol. The PCs gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks in Brindol until they depart for Fortress Graystone.

Failure: If the PCs get 3 failures before 4 successes, the Hall of Great Valor is consumed by fire. The PCs' efforts to save it cost each member of the party 1 healing surge. Additionally, the folk of Brindol blame them for drawing the murderous bounty hunters down on their community. Word quickly spreads, and all PCs take a -2 penalty to Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made in Elsir Vale until the end of this adventure.

Burning Floor	**Level 4 Obstacle**
Hazard	XP 175

The fire started by the bounty hunters spreads along the dusty timbers of the floor.

Hazard: Anyone passing through the flames runs the risk of taking fire damage.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the fire.

Trigger

The fire attacks when a creature enters a square of burning floor.

Special

Each round that the fire burns, it extends its range into 1d4 additional squares, chosen at random.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: Creature in the flames
Attack: +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 2 fire damage.

Countermeasures

Any attack that deals cold damage targeting 1 or more squares of burning floor douses the flames in those squares. However, until the skill challenge has been successfully completed, new squares of flame will erupt in subsequent rounds.

The Stairs

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

2 Wicked Fang sentries (E)
2 Wicked Fang scouts (C)
1 stonewalker spirit (S)

When the PCs climb the great stairs leading up and into Fortress Graystone, they are challenged by the defenders placed here by Fangren. Gnoll sentries are aided by a creature sent by agents of the demon Lord Yeenoghu—a stonewalker spirit that lurks among the statues on the stairs. Thus far, the guards have dealt with little more than animals wandering in from the forest, and they are spoiling for a real fight.

When the PCs see the stairs, read:

Against the cliff face ahead, a massive stone staircase rises, narrowing as it reaches a set of double stone doors set into the rock wall. Four large statues, each depicting a githzerai warrior in full combat regalia, stand on pedestals watching over the entrance to Fortress Graystone. A small waterfall flows down the side of the mountain, eroding a stone balcony set further up the cliff face and leaving the stone steps slick and treacherous.

2 Wicked Fang Scouts (C) **Level 7 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10, low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage (crit 1d6 + 15), or 1d6 + 11 damage (crit 1d6 + 17) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage, or 1d6 + 11 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Cowardly Shot (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires hand crossbow; ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage, or 1d6 + 11 damage while bloodied; the gnoll scout can shift 2 squares both before and after making the attack; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll scout deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the scout's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts

2 Wicked Fang Sentries (E) **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11, low-light vision
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 7

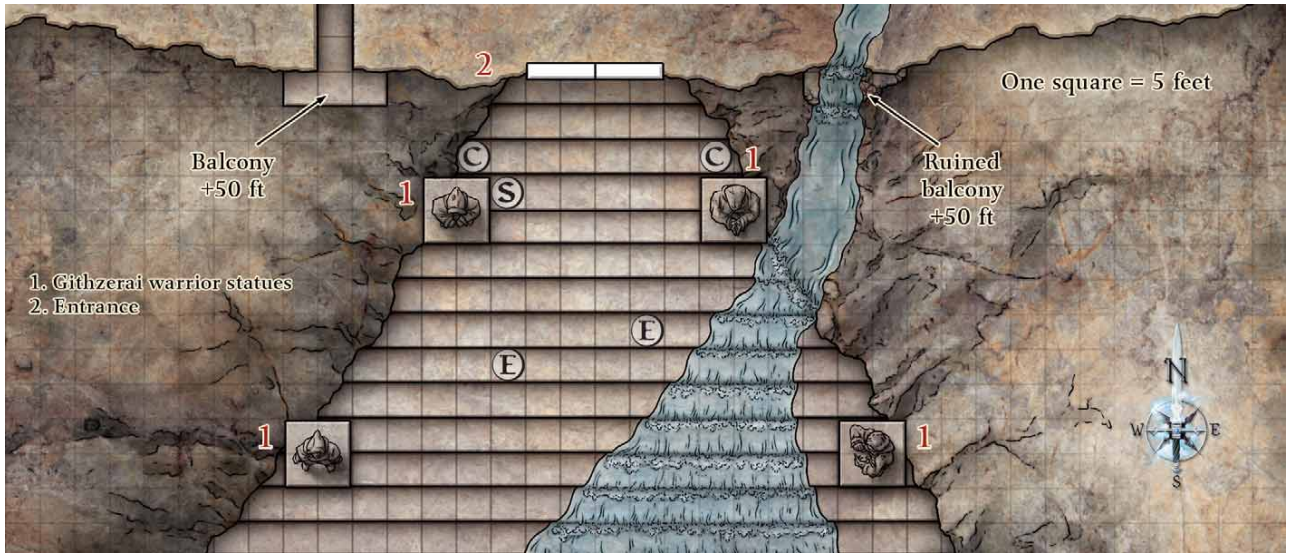
Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17), or 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19) while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll sentry's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Defend the Pack (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 1; +12 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage, or 1d12 + 7 damage while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll sentry's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Defensive Lure (move; encounter)
The gnoll sentry shifts 3 squares, then pulls all targets it has marked 3 squares.

Pack Attack
The gnoll sentry deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll sentry's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword



Stonewalker Spirit (S)	Level 7 Lurker
Medium elemental magical beast (earth)	XP 300
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20	
Immune disease, petrification, poison; **Resist** insubstantial	
Speed fly 6 (hover)	
⊕ **Spectral Grasp** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Petrifying Touch** (standard; recharge ⚅)	
+10 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Save*: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save*: The target is petrified (no save), and is considered to be a statue for the purposes of the *possess statue* ability.	
Possess Statue (free, when entering the same space as a statue; at-will)	
The stonewalker spirit assumes the form of a possessed statue. Use the possessed statue stat block instead of the stonewalker spirit's stat block.	
Flee the Form (free, when a possessed statue is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will)	
The stonewalker spirit takes 16 damage (ignores insubstantial) as it reverts to its normal form, then moves up to its speed.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Primordial	
Skills Stealth +11	
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+5)	
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)	

Perception Check

DC 14: *Though you see no sign of anyone on the stairs, telltale shadows give away the presence of creatures hiding behind the statues.*

As the PCs climb the stairs, read:

With a yelp, four gnolls slip out of hiding places behind the statues and race forward to attack.

The stonewalker spirit begins the encounter hovering behind one of the statues, which it possesses in the first round.

Possessed Statue	Level 7 Brute
Large natural animate	XP –
Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 24; **Bloodied** 12	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20	
Speed 5	
⊕ **Stone Fists** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Thundering Charge** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**	
+10 vs. AC; 4d8 + 7 damage; the possessed statue can move up to its speed before making this attack, and any creature that hits the possessed statue with an opportunity attack during this movement takes 1d8 + 7 thunder damage.	
Surefooted	
The possessed statue ignores difficult terrain.	
Merely a Shell	
A possessed statue has a hit point total of its own, and does not share hit points with its stonewalker spirit form. Damage dealt to the possessed statue is not dealt to the stonewalker spirit form.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Primordial	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+5)	
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)	

Tactics

The stonewalker spirit possesses a statue in the first round, attacking in that form. It uses *thundering charge* as often as possible, laying into the PCs with its stone fists while it waits for that power to recharge. If forced to flee a statue, the stonewalker spirit uses its *petrifying touch* power on a spellcaster or ranged combatant before possessing another statue.

The gnoll sentries stay front and center in melee, maximizing the effect of their *defend the pack* attacks, then making greatsword attacks while that power recharges.

The gnoll scouts snipe with shortbows against any PCs on the outskirts of melee. If pressed, they drop their bows and attack with short swords.

The gnolls on the stairs fight in close proximity to take advantage of their *pack attack* power.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright sunlight during the day; dim starlight at night.

Stairs: The wide stone stairs leading up to the entrance are difficult terrain when ascending. Characters descending or moving horizontally along the stairs treat them as normal terrain.

Waterfall: Where the waterfall flows down the stairs, the stone has been worn smooth and slippery. Any creature that falls prone in one of those square slides 1 square down the stairs.

Statues: The four statues depict the ancient githzerai who built Fortress Graystone. A statue provides cover unless possessed by the stonewalker spirit. When possessed by the stonewalker spirit, the statue breaks free of its pedestal, destroying it and turning the squares it occupied into difficult terrain.

Wall and Balcony: The balcony juts out from the wall 50 feet above the top of the stairs. The crumbling stone wall cannot be climbed.

Thorn's Attack

Encounter Level 11 (3,000 XP)

Setup

Thorn, bounty hunter
2 elderwood falcons
2 ironwood hounds

Though he has shown great caution as he follows the PCs and reactivates the traps in Fortress Graystone, the bounty hunter Thorn eventually makes his move against the party.

This encounter can take place at any time once the PCs have arrived at Fortress Graystone, at your discretion. Thorn should attack at a point when the PCs' resources have been depleted—after a difficult encounter, halfway through an attempt to take an extended rest, and so on. (Allow the PCs to take a short rest before Thorn attacks, as they are likely to need their encounter powers and have a chance to heal up in order to defeat him.)

Since this encounter can take place anywhere in Fortress Graystone, use the "Features of the Area" from the appropriate location. If Thorn attacks when the PCs have left the fortress to take an extended rest in the forest, map the area to incorporate the features presented below.

Thorn attempts to catch the PCs unawares in order to gain a surprise round, either approaching by way of one of the secret doors in the fortress or attacking from cover elsewhere.

Perception Check
DC 19: *A faint sound betrays footsteps behind you. The elf mercenary Thorn is attempting to approach unheard, two fierce-looking hounds at his side and a pair of hunting falcons on his shoulders. As you see him, he snarls a command, the dogs bounding forward as the falcons take to the air.*

2 Elderwood Falcons — **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate — XP 250
Initiative +9 — **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 2, fly 6 (hover)
⊕ **Talon** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, and the target slides 1 square.
↯ **Swoop** (standard; at-will)
The elderwood falcon shifts 1 square, makes a talon attack, then shifts 1 square.
Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** –
Str 8 (+2) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

2 Ironwood Hounds — **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural animate — XP 250
Initiative +6 — **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 69; **Bloodied** 34
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Speed 6
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the ironwood hound's next turn.
↯ **Drive Back** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and the ironwood hound can shift 2 squares. The ironwood hound must end its shift adjacent to the target's new position.
Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** –
Skills Intimidate +7
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Thorn — **Level 9 Solo Skirmisher**
Medium fey humanoid, elf — XP 2,000
Initiative +11 — **Senses** Perception +7
HP 388; **Bloodied** 194
AC 25; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6
Action Points 2
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage
Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage
Double Bolts (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Thorn makes two hand crossbow attacks.
Gripping Net (minor; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 2/5; Requires net; +12 vs. Reflex; target is restrained (save ends).
Pepper Bomb (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 5/10; Requires pepper bomb; +12 vs. Reflex; target is blinded (save ends).
Retaliatory Shot (immediate reaction; when hit by a ranged or area attack; at-will)
Thorn makes a hand crossbow attack against the target that hit him.
Bolt Storm (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires hand crossbow; area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage.
Desperate Bolt Storm (free; when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Thorn's *bolt storm* recharges, and he uses it immediately.
Elven Accuracy (free; encounter)
Thorn can reroll an attack roll. He must use the second roll, even if it is lower.
Wild Step
Thorn ignores difficult terrain when he shifts.
Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +12, Insight +12, Stealth +14, Survival +12, Thievery +14
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, hand crossbow with 40 bolts, longsword, net, 6 pepper bombs

Tactics

The first full round, Thorn takes two minor actions to target a wizard or other controller with *pepper bomb* and hit a melee combatant with *gripping net*. He then makes hand crossbow attacks against lightly armored foes, using *bolt storm* if he can target three or more PCs. While wielding his hand crossbow, he uses *retaliatory shot* to target PCs engaged by the hounds or the falcons. If pressed into melee, he spends his action points to make additional *pepper bomb* or *gripping net* attacks, resorting to longsword attacks only if he has no other option.

The ironwood hounds stay in the thick of melee, making bite attacks and using *drive back* to keep combatants away from Thorn.

The elderwood falcons make *swoop* attacks against lightly armored PCs, staying out of melee range and sliding foes who try to engage Thorn.

Aftermath

If Thorn is kept alive, he can be easily convinced to tell the PCs his story in exchange for his life. The bounty hunter is happy to bargain away his knowledge of the fortress's secret passageways, and to fill the PCs in on the layout of any sections they have not yet seen. In addition, Thorn knows most of the history of the fortress (having explored it in his youth), and he can fill the PCs in on the information presented on page 65.

Thorn reserves his most significant knowledge to bargain for his freedom, promising the PCs (truthfully) that he will abandon his pursuit of them if they let him flee the fortress. If the PCs agree, Thorn informs them that Sarshan is behind the bounty placed on their heads in Overlook. (If Thorn does not survive this encounter, the PCs discover a note on his body linking Sarshan to the bounty.)

Features of the Area

Use the following features to create an encounter area outside the fortress if Thorn attacks while the PCs are taking an extended rest.

Trees: Squares containing trees are difficult terrain and provide concealment to anyone standing in them. A tree's trunk provides cover to anyone standing adjacent to it.

Stream: Where the waterfall hits the tree line, it carves out a narrow stream that flows 5 feet deep and is difficult terrain. Characters in the water gain cover except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a –2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows.

Boulders: These 5-foot-high rocks provide cover. A boulder can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check.

Githzerai Mind Trap

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

Setup

1 gnoll demonic scourge (D)
2 Wicked Fang maulers (M)
2 Wicked Fang lashers (L)

The githzerai mind trap was disabled when the gnolls seized control of the fortress. However, Thorn has beaten the party here and reactivated it, hoping to wear the PCs down by pitting them against the gnoll defenders now trapped here.

The gnoll demonic scourge and his two lashers begin in the second chamber, while the two gnoll maulers begin in the first chamber near the entrance to the fortress.

When the PCs enter the fortress, read:

As the stone doors open, you see a wide octagonal chamber before you. On five of the walls, portals glow and pulse with arcane energy. The far side of the room appears to be made of extremely thick glass, revealing a second chamber beyond with four portals on the wall. A massive circle of carved runes dominates the floor of the first chamber, while a smaller circle adorns the floor of the room beyond.

Tactics

The gnoll maulers stay in the thick of melee, using their *backhand* power as often as possible alongside *beat back* and greatsword attacks.

The gnoll lashers focus *whip flay* and *drag around* attacks on spellcasters and ranged combatants. Both the maulers and lashers use their forced movement abilities to force PCs through the portals, splitting the party.

The gnoll demonic scourge stays in the area with the maximum number of allies, increasing the effectiveness of its *leader of the pack* aura and *bloodthirst* ability.

Gnoll Demonic Scourge (D) **Level 8 Brute (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 350

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Leader of the Pack aura 5; allies in the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls. While this creature is bloodied, the bonus increases to +2.
HP 106; **Bloodied** 53
AC 20; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 5

⊕ **Heavy Flail** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 7 while bloodied; against a bloodied enemy, this attack also knocks the target prone; see also *pack attack*.

Bloodthirst
If the gnoll demonic scourge bloodies an enemy with a melee attack, an ally adjacent to the enemy can make a melee attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.

Overwhelming Attack (free; encounter)
The gnoll demonic scourge applies its *bloodthirst* power to two allies instead of one.

Pack Attack
The gnoll demonic scourge deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the demonic scourge's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Insight +10, Intimidate +13, Religion +10
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 15 (+6)
Equipment hide armor, heavy flail

2 Wicked Fang Maulers (M) **Level 7 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 7

⊕ **Shadar-Kai Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

↓ **Backhand** (minor; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞))
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 damage, or 1d6 + 10 damage while bloodied, and the target is knocked prone; see also *pack attack*.

↓ **Beat Back** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied, and the target is pushed 2 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll mauler deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll mauler's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Athletics +12
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

2 Wicked Fang Lashers (L) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 93; **Bloodied** 46
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Speed 7

⊕ **Barbed Whip** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (or 1d8 + 6 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 5 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

↓ **Whip Flay** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage (or 3d8 + 9 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 10 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

↓ **Drag Around** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage (or 2d8 + 7 damage while bloodied) and the target slides 3 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll lasher deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll lasher's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Stealth +14
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment: hide armor, barbed whip

Running the Mind Trap

The githzerai mind trap's shifting portals are meant to confuse the PCs, but their movement can be tracked by you in a relatively simple way. When the first creature passes through a portal, make a tally mark indicating that the portals have shifted. On subsequent turns, if a creature steps through a portal in the first room, find that portal in the second or third rooms (treating both as one area), then move a number of portals counterclockwise equal to the current tally. Afterward, add another tally mark.

If a creature steps into a portal in the second room, find the correct exit portal in the first room, then move clockwise a number of portals equal to the current tally. (Do not add another tally for creatures moving from the second room to the first.)

When your tally reaches 5, the portals have shifted back to their initial positions and you can start again.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torches on the walls and the arcane runes on the floor fill both chambers with bright light.

Arcane Circles: The first and second chambers in the mind trap feature circles of glowing arcane runes that power the area's portals. A DC 19 Arcana check and 10 minutes work allows a PC to control the circles, stabilizing the portals and preventing them from shifting each time a creature passes through (see below).

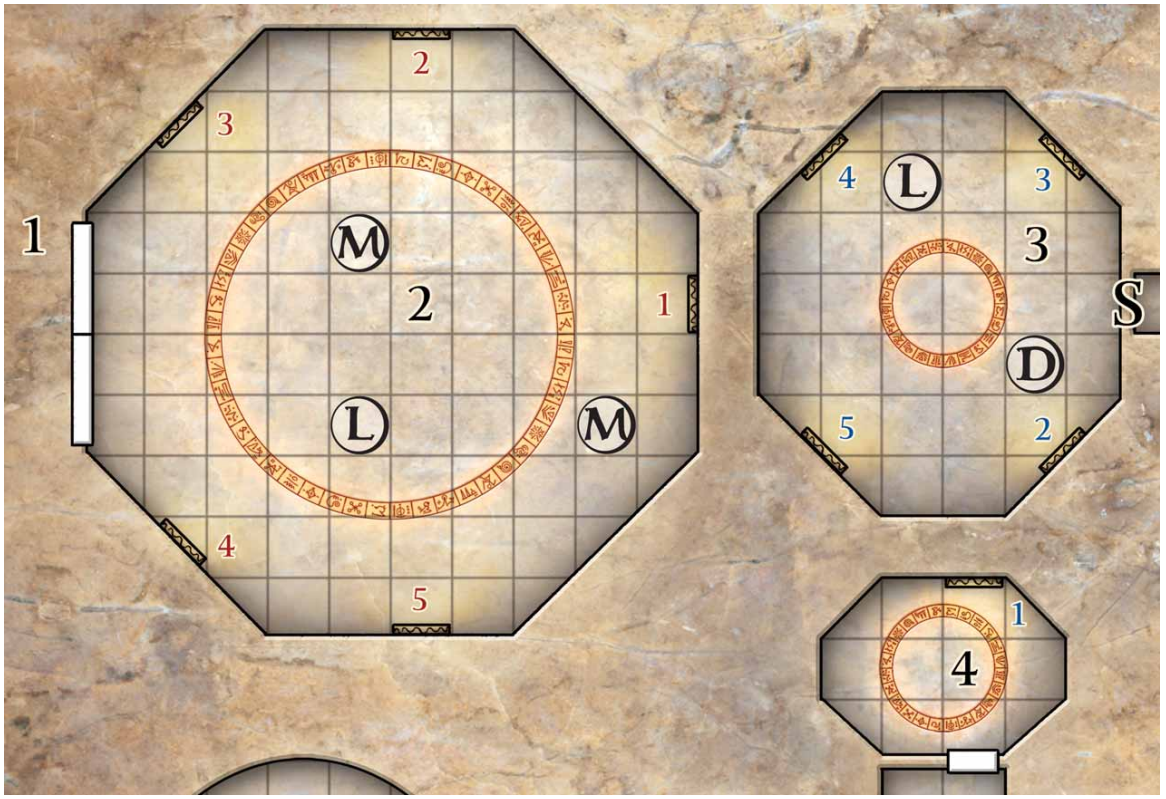
Mind Trap Portals: The githzerai mind trap is designed to disorient creatures attempting an incursion of Fortress Graystone. The mind trap consists of a set of linked portals, five in the first chamber, four in the second, and one in the final chamber. Each of the portals in the first chamber is linked to one of the other portals, as noted by the numbers on each portal. When a creature enters one portal, it exits through the other portal of the same number.

However, each time a creature passes through a portal in either direction, the portals in the first chamber shift one position clockwise. For example, portal 1 begins on the north wall of the room. The first time a creature passes through any portal, portal 1 shifts to the south side of the room, with all the other portals moving with it accordingly.

Only the portals in the first chamber shift position, and this movement is undetectable by simple observation. In order to exit the mind trap, each character must reach the exit chamber by passing through portal 1, or by taking the secret door in the second chamber.

Secret Door: This portal leads to the secret passages used by the gnolls (and Thorn) to move about the fortress. A DC 19 Perception check reveals the presence of the door, which can be opened normally.

Translucent Walls: The stone walls between the three githzerai mind trap chambers have the magical appearance of massive sheets of glass. These walls block line of effect but not line of sight, and allow the PCs to see into the other chambers (helping them determine how to exit the mind trap).



The Cells

Encounter Level 9 (1,900 XP)

Setup

1 Wicked Fang keeper (W)
2 Wicked Fang guards (G)
1 Wicked Fang mauler (M)
1 Wicked Fang lasher (L)

Since taking over Fortress Graystone, the gnolls have captured dozens of prisoners on Sarshan's orders. Three survivors of these raids are currently being held in an area the gnolls refer to as the cells. These prisoners and their unfortunate predecessors are fated to become the subjects of Fangren's dark experiments.

When the PCs first descend the stairs, read:

From somewhere ahead comes a foul smell and the barking of harsh voices.

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

At the bottom of the second staircase is a crescent-shaped chamber set with three doors, its walls and floors stained red-black with dried blood. The stench of rot and filth is overwhelming, a number of gnolls apparently oblivious to it as they argue among themselves.

If a PC speaks gnoll, the argument concerns the keeper reminding the other guards that the prisoners cannot be eaten, on Fangren's orders. The PCs can make Stealth checks against the gnolls' Perception checks in an attempt to approach unseen. However, the gnolls are alert.

Wicked Fang Keeper (W) **Level 8 Elite Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 178; **Bloodied** 89
AC 24; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Rain of Blades (standard; at-will)
The gnoll keeper makes three handaxe attacks, each of which must be against a different target.

No Escape This Time (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires short sword; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied and the target is knocked prone; see also *pack attack*.

Keeper's Shackles (minor; recharge ⚅)
Targets adjacent prone creature; +12 vs. Fortitude; target is restrained (until escape).

Caltrops (minor; encounter)
The gnoll keeper can designate a 1-square burst area within 5 squares; that area is filled with caltrops. Until the end of the encounter, any creature that enters a square filled with caltrops without treating it as difficult terrain takes 1d6 + 4 damage.

Pack Attack
The gnoll keeper deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll keeper's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +11
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai short sword

2 Wicked Fang Guards (G) **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

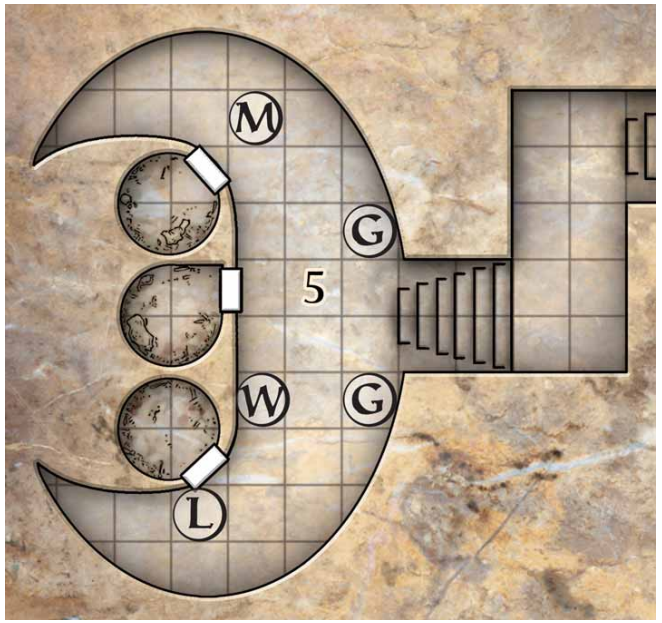
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19), or 1d12 + 9 damage (crit 1d12 + 21) while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll guard's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Pinning Attack (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greatsword; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19), or 1d12 + 9 damage (crit 1d12 + 21) while bloodied, and the target is immobilized until the end of the gnoll guard's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll guard deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll guard's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword



Wicked Fang Mauler (M) **Level 7 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Backhand (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 damage, or 1d6 + 10 damage while bloodied, and the target is knocked prone; see also *pack attack*.

Beat Back (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied, and the target is pushed 2 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll mauler deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll mauler's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Athletics +12
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

Wicked Fang Lasher (L) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 93; **Bloodied** 46
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Speed 7

Barbed Whip (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (or 1d8 + 6 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 5 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

Whip Flay (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage (or 3d8 + 9 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 10 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

Drag Around (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage (or 2d8 + 7 damage while bloodied) and the target slides 3 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll lasher deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll lasher's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Stealth +14
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment: hide armor, barbed whip

Tactics

The gnoll keeper throws his *caltrops* to impede the PCs' movement, then stays back to throw handaxes at lightly armored targets. If pressed into melee, he uses *no escape this time* to set up his *keeper's shackles* attack.

The gnoll guards mark the most powerful looking melee combatants in an attempt to keep them occupied. They reserve their *pinning attack* for a spellcaster or ranged combatant.

The gnoll mauler takes on the most powerful-looking melee combatant with *beat back* and greatsword attacks. When its *backhand* power is recharged, it uses it to push its current foe into melee with the guards or the lasher, then selects another target.

The gnoll lashers target spellcasters and ranged combatants with *whip flay* and *drag around* attacks, using their reach to fight past their allies if need be.

Development

Three prisoners occupy the cells. All are in failing health but have enough strength to flee the fortress if given food and water.

The captives have no knowledge of the gnolls' operations or plans.

The prisoners are all from different areas of Elsir Vale, and they have no idea why they were kidnapped by the gnolls. Each is a person of some importance—a wealthy landowner, a curate at a church of Pelor, and a retired sage.

If any of the gnolls are kept alive for questioning, they speak of Fangren's experiments in the ritual chamber. They know that he uses the prisoners to test the effects of powerful magic on living subjects, but they do not know his overall plans.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torches shed bright light throughout the area. The cells are dark if their doors are closed; dimly lit if their doors are open.

Cells: The cells in which the prisoners are held were once the personal chambers of the githzerai who built the fortress. Their furnishings rotted away long ago, and the prisoners now sleep on beds of filthy straw. The doors are not locked, but the prisoners' fear keeps them in line.

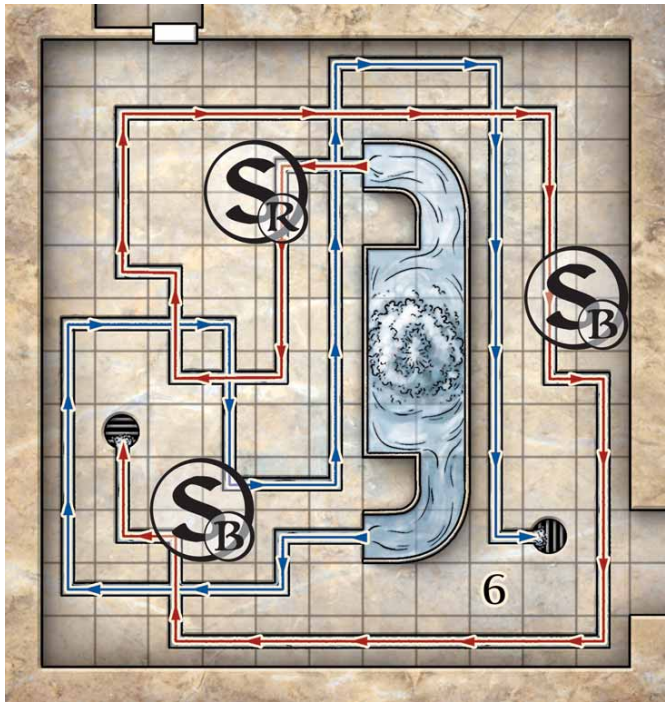
Training Chamber

Encounter Level 8 (1,850 XP)

Setup

1 ruin-touched beastcaller (R)
2 ruin-touched bloodwalkers (B)
3 slaughterfang hyenas (S)

Once a githzerai training ground, this chamber has been given over to the ruin-touched gnolls within the Wicked Fang tribe. The ruin-touched—gnolls who undergo powerful rituals in order to gain the supernatural grace of their demon lord—gave Fangren the knowledge that allowed him to control the planar breach at the heart of Fortress Graystone.



When the characters can see into this area, read:

The ceiling of this huge chamber rises some 60 feet overhead. The sound of rushing water sounds out faintly, a meager reflection of its source—a waterfall descending from an opening in the ceiling to a pool set within a raised platform. Two stone gutters carry water down from the pool into channels in the floor, creating small rivers that flow through circuitous paths in the ground with great speed. Every few seconds, the noise of stone on stone sounds out as these aqueducts in the floor shift to follow a new path.

2 Ruin-Touched Bloodwalker **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 95; **Bloodied** 47
AC 23; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21; see also *blood defense*
Speed 6

Jagged Sickle (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17).

Blood Defense (standard; target must be bloodied; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the bloodwalker gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

Bloodwalk (move; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Teleportation**
The bloodwalker teleports up to 10 squares to a space adjacent to a bloodied creature, including itself if it is bloodied.

Blood Frenzy (free; the bloodwalker must be bloodied; at-will)
When the bloodwalker makes a successful melee attack, it shifts 2 squares.

Pack Attack
The bloodwalker deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the bloodwalker's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +13, Religion +10, Stealth +14
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Equipment: hide armor, jagged sickle

Beastcaller **Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21
Speed 6

Claw (standard; at will)
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

Javelin (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

Murderous Flock (standard; recharge ⚃)
Ravens appear from nowhere and descend upon the battlefield. Burst 3 within 20; targets enemies; +11 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). *Miss:* Half damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends) and the target is not blinded.

Erupting Swarm (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚃)
Vermin boil from the earth and ravage everything in their path. Burst 3 within 10; targets enemies on the ground; +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both). *Miss:* Half damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends) and the target is not immobilized. *Effect:* The area becomes difficult terrain until the end of the encounter.

Against the Tide (minor 1/round; at-will)
Ranged 10; targets one creature hit by *murderous flock* or *erupting swarm* this turn; +13 vs. Fortitude; the beastcaller slides the target 3 squares or the target is knocked prone.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +11
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, 3 javelins

3 Slaughterfang Hyenas (S)	Level 6 Skirmisher
Large natural beast	XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18	
Speed 8	
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8+4 damage.	
Harrier	
If a slaughterfang is adjacent to an enemy, all other creatures have combat advantage against that enemy when making melee attacks.	
Pack Attack ✦ Mount	
The slaughterfang hyena deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the hyena's allies adjacent to it. When mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher who also has the pack attack trait, the slaughterfang and its rider count as allies for pack attack purposes, meaning they need only one additional adjacent ally to use this ability.	
Ravaging Charge (when mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher who also has the pack attack trait; at will) **✦ Mount**	
When making a charge attack, the slaughterfang hyena and its rider both deal extra damage as per their pack attack power, even if they have no other allies adjacent to the foe. If they *do* have at least one other ally adjacent to the foe, their pack attack deals an extra point of damage (that is, 6 rather than 5).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)

Tactics

The ruin-touched gnolls begin the encounter mounted on the slaughterfang hyenas. Once they are bloodied, the bloodwalkers dismount while the hyenas continue to fight on their own.

The ruin-touched beastcaller sends its *murderous flock* and *erupting swarm* against the PCs, employing *against the tide* to slide individual PCs into the aqueducts or into position for flanking attacks.

The ruin-touched bloodwalkers focus on a single target each, making *jagged sickle attacks* until they are bloodied. They then use their *bloodwalk* power to regroup or to follow the foe that bloodied them, as appropriate.

The slaughterfang hyenas make charge attacks whenever possible, staying close to grant *pack attack* bonuses to both them and their riders.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Braziers built into the walls provide bright light throughout the area.

Waterfall and Pool: The waterfall descends from an opening in the ceiling 60 feet above, where a mountain stream has been diverted into the fortress. The water cascades down from the ceiling to land in a pool set within a 10-foot-tall platform, then is shunted into aqueducts (see below).

The water in the pool is 3 feet deep and is difficult terrain. Additionally, the force of the falling water deals 1d6 damage to any creature that ends its turn in the pool.

The platform provides cover and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

The magical power that shunts the water through the aqueducts also mutes the noise of the waterfall to a faint roar.

Aqueducts: Shallow aqueducts mark out a circuitous path across the floor of the chamber. Water is magically shunted through these channels with enough force to move creatures, testing the balance and perception of the githzerai who trained here. Stone tiles slide over the aqueduct segments not currently in use, allowing creatures to pass over those squares unhindered. These paths are indicated on the map by red and blue lines, with arrows indicating the direction in which the water flows to drain grates cemented into the stone floor.

When the encounter begins, determine which path the water is currently following by rolling 1d6. On an odd result, the water flows along the red path; on an even result, along the blue path. At the beginning of each round, roll again to determine whether the flow of water continues or changes.

At the start of a creature's turn, if it is in a square through which water is flowing, it slides 1 square along the water's path. If the next square in the path is currently occupied, that creature also slides 1 square, and so on.

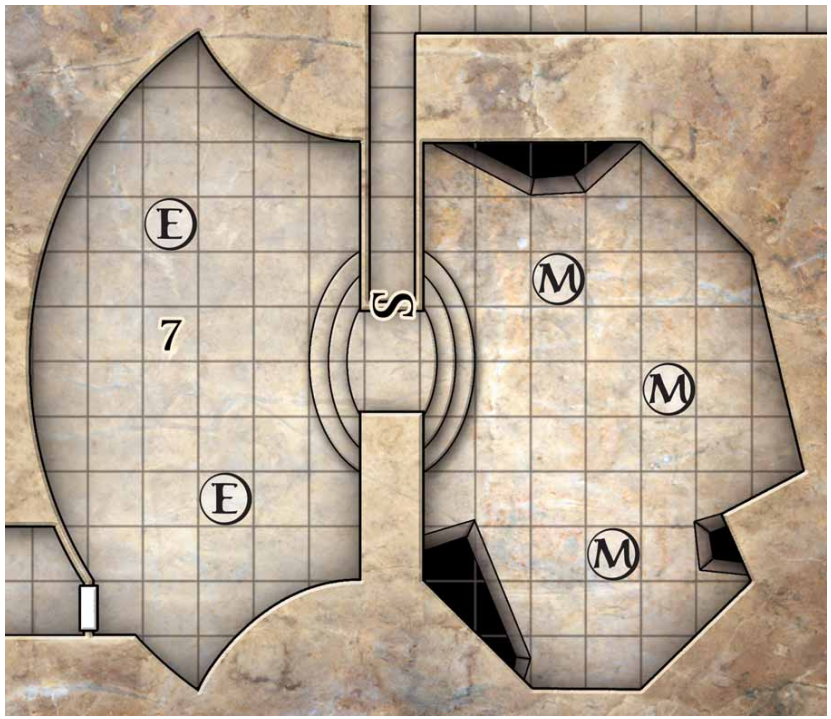
Meditation Chamber

Encounter Level 8 (1,850 XP)

Setup

2 githzerai psionic echoes (E)
3 mindscramblers (M)

The gnolls of the Wicked Fang pack consider this area haunted. As a result, it remains untouched and as it was when the githzerai abandoned this place.



When the PCs approach this area (whether through the secret door or the double doors), read:

The door before you appears to have been jammed shut with the broken haft of a spear. Scrawled across its face are warnings written in the Abyssal tongue of the gnolls: "DANGER! HAUNTED! STAY OUT!"

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

This huge chamber is divided into two zones. To the south is a wide hall with sweeping, curved walls. To the north is a rough-edged cavern full of odd angles and irregular ridges across the floor. The walls of this second chamber have been painted in chaotic and clashing colors, three pits along its edge falling off into darkness. A wide wall separates these two areas, cut by a circular platform that rises 15 feet high.

When the PCs enter the meditation chamber, their presence disturbs the area's ancient guardians. In the southern chamber (an area dedicated to law), the ghostlike psionic echoes of two githzerai warriors perceive the PCs as intruders and manifest to attack. At the same time, the githzerai's appearance summons three mindscramblers in the northern chamber, infused with the energy of primordial chaos.

When the first PC passes more than 3 squares from either the main door or the secret door, read:

Suddenly, the air in the southern chamber begins to shimmer as the spectral figures of two githzerai appear. Though they wield no weapons, their intentions are clear as they circle around you, preparing to strike.

At the same time, the chaotic colors of the walls to the north are suddenly rent by dazzling light. Three translucent forms appear, their shifting colors blazing as they move to attack.

2 Githzerai Psionic Echoes (E)	**Level 9 Soldier**
Medium elemental humanoid	XP 400
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +9
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46	
AC 25; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22	
Speed 7	
Unarmed Strike (standard; at-will)	
+16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.	
Lesser Mindstrike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
Range 10; +14 vs. Will; 1d10 + 9 psychic damage.	
Psionic Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**	
+14 vs. Will; 2d8 + 9 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage; until the end of its next turn, the target has vulnerable 10 psychic.	
Iron Mind (immediate interrupt; when the githzerai psionic echo would be hit by an attack; encounter)	
The githzerai psionic echo gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.	
Unstable Manifestation (immediate reaction; when the githzerai psionic echo takes damage; encounter)	
The githzerai psionic echo becomes insubstantial until the end of its next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Str 14 (+6)	**Dex** 17 (+7)	**Wis** 11 (+4)
Con 12 (+5)	**Int** 10 (+4)	**Cha** 20 (+9)

3 Mindscramblers (M)	Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium elemental animate	XP 350
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +3
HP 89; **Bloodied** 44	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Chaos Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
+11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 psychic damage.	
Scrambled Mind (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
+11 vs. Will; 1d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target makes a melee basic attack against one of its adjacent allies.	
Dizzying Touch (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**	
+11 vs. Will; 3d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target slides 3 squares and is dazed (save ends).	
Misdirection (immediate interrupt; when an enemy within 10 squares moves or shifts; encounter)	
+11 vs. Will; the target is pushed 3 squares and may not continue its movement.	
Trace Chance (standard; encounter)	
Ranged 5; no attack roll required; the next melee attack made against the target gains a +5 power bonus and, if it hits, it is automatically a critical hit.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Primordial
Skills Intimidate +12	
Str 11 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+7)	**Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 17 (+7)	**Int** 8 (+3)	**Cha** 16 (+7)

Tactics

The mindscramblers select targets for their *trace chance* ability, then use their *dizzying touch* on randomly selected foes. They make *chaos touch* or *scrambled mind* attacks while waiting for *dizzying touch* to recharge, reserving the latter for targets with adjacent allies.

The githzerai psionic echoes open with *psionic strikes*, then make *lesser mindstrike* attacks against the same target to maximize damage. They follow up with *unarmed strike* and *lesser mindstrike* attacks against whatever PCs the mindscramblers are not engaging.

The mindscramblers and the psionic echoes are diametrically opposed to each other, but they focus their attacks exclusively on the PCs. However, they do not aid each other or flank.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The walls in both parts of the chamber glow with dim light.

Ground: The ridges in the northern part of the chamber make the floor in that area difficult terrain. The floor in the southern part of the chamber is normal.

Pits: Shadowy illusion magic make the pits in the northern part of the chamber appear bottomless. In actuality, each is only 10 feet deep. A creature that falls into a pit takes 1d10 damage and is blinded by the shadow until it can climb out. It takes a DC 15 Athletics check to escape a pit.

Circular Platform: the platform that marks the center of the chamber stands 15 feet high. Its wide steps can be climbed or descended normally.

Secret Door: A secret door on the western side of the barrier that divides the chamber leads to the passage running through the fortress. Once located (Perception DC 19), the door can be opened easily.

Marshaling Point

Encounter Level 8 (1,804 XP)

Setup

Kyrion, shadar-kai weaponmaster (S)
1 Wicked Fang warmaster (W)
8 Wicked Fang recruits (R)
2 gnoll huntmasters (H)

This former githzerai great hall has been converted into a training area for new Wicked Fang recruits. A shadar-kai weaponmaster, Kyrion, has been training the recruits in the fighting style of the shadar-kai and instructing the pack's warmaster in the use of his magic weapon, a barbed sword known as Wicked Fang.

Two gnoll huntmasters armed with longbows begin the encounter in the secret passage on the far west side of the room.

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

The foul scent of gnoll assaults you the moment the door is opened. This massive chamber was once decorated with bas-reliefs, now crumbled and defaced by the marks of weapons. Crude practice dummies scattered across the chamber are under attack by a pack of armed gnolls under the direction of a shadar-kai.

The east and west walls of the chamber are lined with dark arrow slits. Two trapdoors in the southern part of the chamber are open, ladders visible and leading down.

Kyrion, Shadar-kai Weaponmaster (S) **Level 8 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 350

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 84; **Bloodied** 42
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Speed 6

⨺ **Shadar-Kai Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage (crit 1d6 + 15).

⨻ **Hurl Weapon** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage; the shadar-kai weaponmaster can use any melee weapon for this attack.

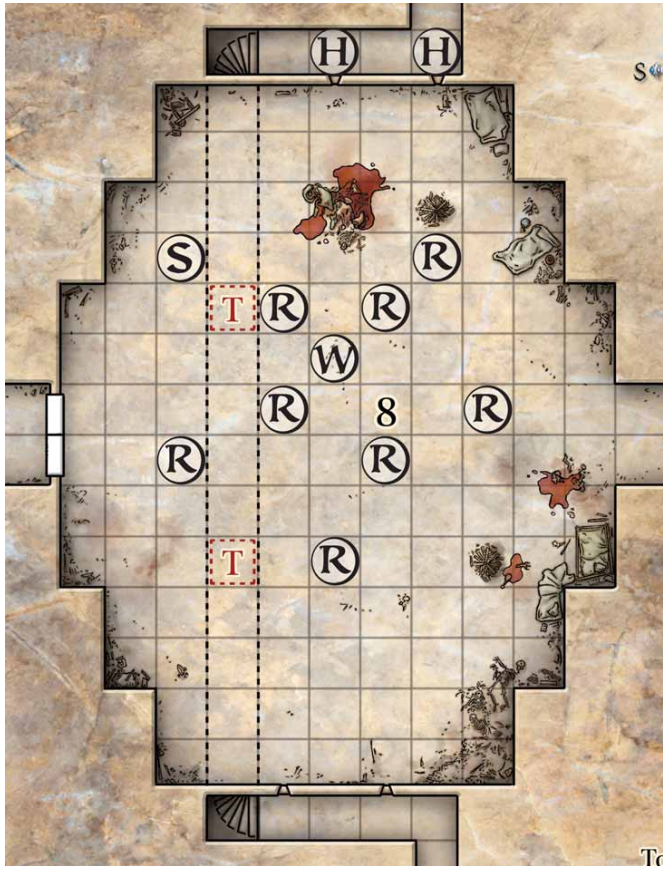
⨺ **Disarming Strike** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 9 damage (crit 1d6 + 27) and the target drops one weapon it is holding. The shadar-kai weaponmaster can choose to catch the dropped weapon in a free hand or have it land on the ground at his feet (in his square).

My Weapon Now (free; when the shadar-kai weaponmaster successfully catches a weapon a target drops; at-will)
The shadar-kai weaponmaster makes a basic attack with the weapon his target just dropped.

Shadow Jaunt (move, encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The shadar-kai weaponmaster teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.

Weapon Master
The shadar-kai weaponmaster is considered to be proficient with all weapons.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +14
Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment: leather armor, shadar-kai short sword



Wicked Fang Warmaster (W) Level 8 Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid XP 350

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Warmaster's Aura aura 5; the gnoll warmaster gains a +1 bonus to AC and all defenses for each ally within the aura (maximum +5)
HP 107; **Bloodied** 53
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20
Speed 7

⊕ **Wicked Fang** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage (crit 3d8 + 24), or 2d8 + 10 (crit 3d8 + 26) damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

↓ **Forward the Wicked Fang** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires *Wicked Fang*; +11 vs. AC; 4d8 + 8 damage (crit 3d8 + 40), or 4d8 + 10 damage (crit 3d8 + 42) while bloodied, and all gnoll allies within the warmaster's aura make a basic attack; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll warmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll warmaster's allies adjacent to it.

Wicked Fang Power (free; when an attack with the weapon keyword hits; daily)
The target also takes ongoing 13 damage (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +10
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+5)
Equipment: hide armor, *Wicked Fang* (see page 96)

8 Wicked Fang Recruits (R) Level 8 Minion
Medium natural humanoid XP 88

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 7

⊕ **Shadar-Kai Greatsword** (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. AC; 8 damage, or 10 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll recruit deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll recruit's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

2 Gnoll Huntmasters (H) Level 5 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid XP 200

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14
Speed 7

⊕ **Handaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, or 1d6 + 5 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

➳ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 7 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows

Tactics

The gnoll warmaster tries to keep minions within his *warmaster's aura* at all times, maximizing his defenses. He wields *Wicked Fang* in melee, using *forward the Wicked Fang* early on in combat before his minions begin to fall.

The gnoll recruits fight with abandon, staying close together in order to take advantage of their *pack attack*.

The gnoll huntmasters enter the fray in the second round, firing their longbows through the arrow slits. They target any creatures that have two or more gnolls adjacent to them in order to take advantage of their *pack attack*. If the PCs pursue them into the passageway, the gnolls attack with handaxes. However, if all their allies in the main chamber fall, the huntmasters flee the fortress and are not seen again.

Kyrion engages the most powerful-looking melee combatant, using *disarming strike* to take the target's weapon, making an attack against the foe with *my weapon now*, then using *hurl weapon* to attack one of the PC's allies. He then focuses short sword attacks on the initial target, hoping for a quick kill.

Though the gnolls fight to the finish, Kyrion is more concerned with saving himself. If he is bloodied and the warmaster is killed, he attempts to flee through the secret passage and out of the fortress.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torches in wall sconces fill the area with bright light. The secret passageway is filled with dim light within 10 feet of the open trapdoors, but is dark elsewhere. (The gnolls and Kyrion know the layout of the secret passages, and can move through them at full speed even with no light.)

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits along the walls allow a creature to make ranged attacks from within the secret passage. An arrow slit grants a ranged attacker superior cover while granting him or her a clear view of the battlefield. The firer determines the target's cover from the square just outside the slit.

Trap Doors: Two trapdoors here lead to the secret passage running through the fortress. A ladder (Athletics DC 5 to climb) drops down to the passageway below. The trap doors are not hidden, and require a minor action to open or close.

Ritual Chamber

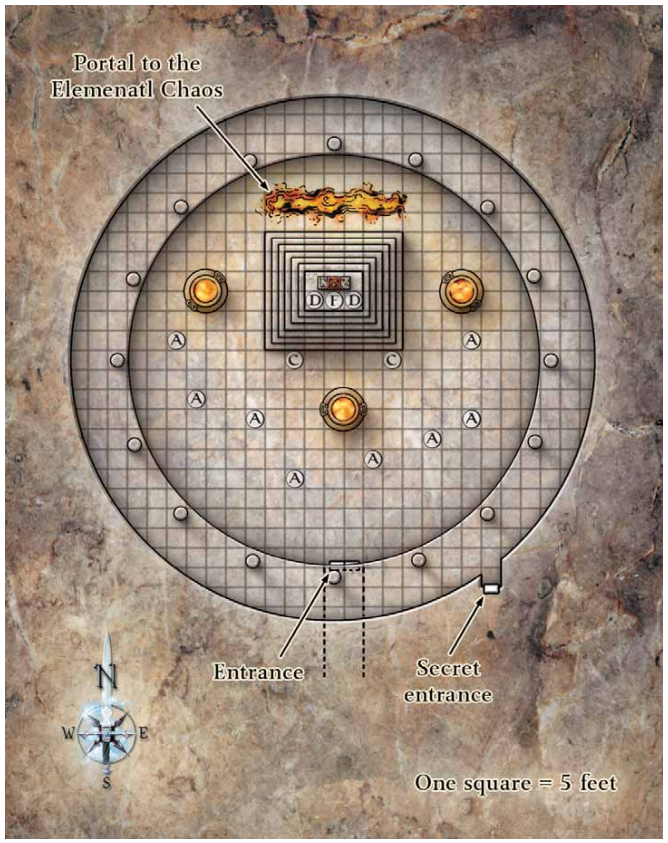
Encounter Level 12 (3,454 XP)

Setup

Fangren, gnoll shaman (F)
2 disciples of Yeenoghu (D)
2 crocottas (C)
8 abyssal wretches (A)

Within this chamber, Fangren is in the final stages of the ritual that will open the conduit to Yeenoghu's realm in the Elemental Chaos. With the link established, the gnoll shaman will be able to ascend to full power as an exarch of the Destroyer. Assisting Fangren in his foul quest are two of his most trusted disciples and two crocottas summoned from the Elemental Chaos. Additionally, eight abyssal wretches lurk in the ritual chamber—all former captives from Elsir Vale that Fangren used as test subjects to evaluate the conduit's power. Now slaves to the shaman, they defend him with their lives.

In addition to Fangren's followers, the gnoll shaman can manipulate the energy of the conduit to create a fearsome weapon.



When the PCs can see into this area, read:

A deep thrumming noise echoes throughout this high-domed ritual chamber, the air crackling with energy. Three large cauldrons burn furiously along walls that rise 10 feet to a wide balcony fronted by crimson curtains. An altar sits atop a stepped dais in the center of the room, a group of hooded gnolls around it. A short distance away, the air ripples in a shifting haze of energy where a portal takes form.

Scattered around the chamber are a number of hunched humanoid creatures—the helpless captives of Elsir Vale, transformed into horrid abyssal wretches. As they spot you, they raise a keening howl, lurching forward to attack.

Fangren (F) **Level 11 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 1,200

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Bloodlust aura 3; all allies within the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls.
HP 228; **Bloodied** 114
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 26
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter; *MM* 282)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

Caustic Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+15 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 fire damage, or 2d6 + 7 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Chaos Bolt (standard; at-will)
+14 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Fangren's next turn.

Blastback (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
+15 vs. Reflex; 4d8 + 5 fire damage, or 4d8 + 7 fire damage while bloodied, and the target is pushed 6 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Vortex of Chaos (standard, encounter) ✦ **Fire, Psychic**
Area burst 1 within 10; +13 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 6 fire damage, and target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Favor of Yeenoghu (minor 1/round; at-will)
The Claw of Yeenoghu (see page 91) makes one attack.

Shun the Nonbeliever (immediate reaction; when an enemy moves adjacent to Fangren; at-will)
The target slides 3 squares.

Pack Attack
Fangren deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of Fangren's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Arcana +13, Religion +15
Str 12 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 18 (+9) **Int** 16 (+8) **Cha** 21 (+10)
Equipment ritual robes, 4 sacrificial daggers

2 Disciples of Yeenoghu (D) **Level 7 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 7

Sacrificial Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, or 2d4 + 7 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Ray of Destruction (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Range 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage, or 2d8 + 10 necrotic damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Ruinous Burst (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Area burst 2 within 10; +10 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 5 fire and necrotic damage, or 3d10 + 5 fire and necrotic damage while bloodied.

Pack Attack
The disciple of Yeenoghu deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the disciple's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +14
Str 11 (+3) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment ritual robes, sacrificial dagger

8 Abyssal Wretches (A) **Level 6 Minion**
Medium elemental humanoid XP 63

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Speed 6

Twisted Claw (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 6 damage.

Inspire Revulsion (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 1; targets one enemy in burst; +7 vs. Will; 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls until the end of the abyssal wretch's next turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 6 (+1)
Con 11 (+3) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 11 (+3)

2 Crocottas* (C) **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental beast (demon) XP 400

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47
AC 23; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20
Resist 5 variable (1/encounter; *MM* 282)
Speed 8

Gore (standard; at-will)
+14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

Haunting Laughter (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 3; +12 vs. Will; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target slides 1 square. *Miss:* The target slides 1 square.

Morphic Visage (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion**
Close blast 3; +12 vs. Will; the crocotta gains combat advantage against the target until the end of its next turn.

Craven (immediate reaction, when targeted by a power with the fear keyword; at-will)
Whenever a crocotta is the target of an attack with the fear keyword, it shifts 4 squares away from the source of the attack.

Feint
If a crocotta shifts at least 1 square during its turn, its melee attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +12
Str 19 (+8) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+4)
*First appeared in *Dragon* #364.

Tactics

At the first sign of trouble, Fangren hits the largest group of PCs with *vortex of chaos*. He then falls back to direct the Claw of Yeenoghu against the party, using *shun the nonbeliever* and *blastback* to push enemies within reach of the claw. If the conduit is disabled before the shaman is killed, he attacks the closest PCs in a fury.

The Disciples of Yeenoghu stay out of melee, using *ray of destruction* from the edge of the fray, then climbing to the balcony to use that power and *ruinous burst*.

The crocottas open combat with *haunting laughter* to draw PCs on the periphery into melee. They then wade into the fray to make gore attacks, using *morphic visage* as often as possible to gain combat advantage.

The abyssal wretches stay close to Fangren, using *inspire revulsion* to protect their leader.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The blazing cauldrons fill the area with bright light.

Balcony: A 10-foot wall fronts the main floor of the chamber, a balcony circling the room beyond it. Columns along the balcony rise to the ceiling, crimson curtains hanging between them. A secret entrance to the ritual chamber can be found in the southeast corner of the balcony.

Dais and Altar: The steps of the dais are difficult terrain when ascending, but are normal terrain for characters moving down or along them.

The altar atop the dais is the focal point of Fangren's ritual. Any creature that touches the altar takes 10 radiant damage, as does any creature that begins its turn in contact with the altar.

The Conduit: The shimmering portal is the physical manifestation of the conduit that Fangren hopes to open to Yeenoghu's realm in the Elemental Chaos. As soon as the PCs appear, Fangren interrupts the still-incomplete ritual in order to take control of the conduit's energy, creating the Claw of Yeenoghu.

Claw of Yeenoghu **Level 8 Lurker**
Hazard XP 350

Through the planar conduit, a massive, clawed hand of primal elemental energy reaches for you.

Hazard: A claw of elemental energy under Fangren's control emerges from the conduit to target any creature within 2 squares of it.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the claw.

Trigger

The Claw of Yeenoghu attacks as directed by Fangren.

Attack

Minor Action **Melee**
Target: One creature within 2 squares of the conduit
Attack: +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire and necrotic damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 10 fire and necrotic damage (until escape; DC 19).

Countermeasures

The countermeasures for the Claw of Yeenoghu are described in the skill challenge.

Closing the Conduit **Level 9**
Skill Challenge XP 1,200

The gnolls have been defeated, but you must still deal with vortex. You must find a way to safely disrupt the energy conduit to the Elemental Chaos, breaking the connection Fangren has created to the realm of Yeenoghu and closing the breach for good.

Even if the PCs kill Fangren without disabling the Claw of Yeenoghu, the energy conduit remains a threat. The PCs need to close the vortex to the Elemental Chaos before they can perform the ritual that Amyria has charged them with.

Complexity

3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills

Arcana, Athletics, History, Perception, Religion.

Other Skills

Endurance.

Victory

Fangren's ritual is undone and the conduit is closed, safely breaking the connection to the Elemental Chaos.

Defeat

The PCs manage to close the conduit, but in doing so, they release a backlash of elemental energy that floods the chamber. All creatures in the room are plagued by terrible nightmares of destruction and ruin each time they sleep or trance. All PCs indefinitely lose one healing surge, so that they regain one less healing surge than normal each time they take an extended rest. The Remove Affliction ritual can remove this effect.

Arcana (DC 14)

The PC uses his or her mastery of arcane knowledge to manipulate the energy flowing from the Elemental Chaos, turning it back on itself.

Athletics (DC 14)

By physically shifting the altar, the PC disrupts the complex connection to the Elemental Chaos created by Fangren's ritual.

History (DC 19)

The PC recalls knowledge of Fortress Graystone and its construction that helps nullify the flow of energy through the conduit.

Perception (DC 19)

The PC notes subtle changes in the flow of energy from the conduit, indicating essential points of weakness in Fangren's uncompleted ritual.

Religion (DC 14)

The PC recites prayers whose power is anathema to Yeenoghu, disrupting the flow of energy between the altar and the demon lord's domain.

Endurance (DC 8)

PCs making Arcana or Athletics checks in the skill challenge put themselves directly into the flow of the conduit's energy. For each Arcana or Athletics check made, a character must also make an Endurance check or take 1d6 damage. This check does not count as a success or failure in the challenge. ⚔

About the Author

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Appendix 1: New Monsters

Abyssal Wretch

When Fangren discovered that the ritual chamber of Fortress Graystone was built around a planar breach, he drew on the knowledge of the ruin-touched gnolls to create the conduit to the Elemental Chaos. However, the shaman's desire to become an exarch of Yeenoghu involved energy that even the ruin-touched gnolls could not predict the effects of.

Fangren decided to use captives the gnolls had kidnapped on Sarshan's orders as test subjects. The first results were abyssal wretches—humans, elves, and other humanoids twisted into horrific reflections of their original forms, tainted by the evil of Yeenoghu.

Abyssal Wretch **Level 6 Minion**
Medium elemental humanoid XP 63
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Speed 6
(standard; at-will) **Twisted Claw**
+9 vs. AC; 6 damage.
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 1; targets one enemy in burst; +7 vs. Will; 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls until the end of the abyssal wretch's next turn.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 6 (+1)
Con 11 (+3) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 11 (+3)

Abyssal Wretch Tactics

Abyssal wretches are brutish minions. If an enemy is vulnerable to psychic damage, they always target that enemy with inspire revulsion. Typically, wretches serving a more powerful master will use *inspire revulsion* as a defense mechanism to protect their leader.

Disciple of Yeenoghu

Disciples of Yeenoghu are life-long servants of the demon lord, serving gnoll cults as sages and scholars. A disciple of Yeenoghu collects the darkest, vilest lore surrounding the Ruler of Ruin, acting as a servant of the cult's leaders and whipping gnoll packs into a frenzy in the service of the demon lord.

Disciple of Yeenoghu **Level 7 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 7
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** **Sacrificial Dagger**
+14 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, or 2d4 + 7 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic** **Ray of Destruction**
Range 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage, or 2d8 + 10 necrotic damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.
(standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic** **Ruinous Burst**
Area burst 2 within 10; +10 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 5 fire and necrotic damage, or 3d10 + 5 fire and necrotic damage while bloodied.
Pack Attack
The disciple of Yeenoghu deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the disciple's allies adjacent to it.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +14
Str 11 (+3) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 18 (+7) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment ritual robes, sacrificial dagger

Disciple of Yeenoghu Tactics

A disciple of Yeenoghu prefers to stand back, using *ray of destruction* and *ruinous burst* on enemies from afar.

Mindscrambler

When the psionic githzerai inhabited Fortress Graystone, the meditation room enabled them to clear their minds of the chaos within and focus on the discipline needed to achieve their top fighting form. Over long years, the githzerai were able to use their mental discipline to purge untamed emotions. As a result, the psionic residue of these chaotic emotions eventually coalesced into chaotic beings of pure mental energy.

Mindscramblers appear to be translucent beings with a vaguely humanoid shape. Mindscramblers have no discernable features, appearing to be little more than a mass of shifting color and light.

Mindscrambler **Level 8 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental animate XP 350
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 89; **Bloodied** 44
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20
Speed 6
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic** **Chaos Touch**
+11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 psychic damage.
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic** **Scrambled Mind**
+11 vs. Will; 1d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target makes a melee basic attack against one of its adjacent allies.
(standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic** **Dizzying Touch**
+11 vs. Will; 3d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target slides 3 squares and is dazed (save ends).
(immediate interrupt; when an enemy within 10 squares moves or shifts; encounter) **Misdirection**
+11 vs. Will; the target is pushed 3 squares and may not continue its movement.
Trace Chance (standard; encounter)
Ranged 5; no attack roll required; the next melee attack made against the target gains a +5 power bonus and, if it hits, it is automatically a critical hit.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial
Skills Intimidate +12
Str 11 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 16 (+7)

Mindscrambler Tactics

Mindscramblers use *trace chance* before approaching to use *dizzying touch*. If the mindscrambler is swarmed, it uses *misdirection* to keep an enemy at bay.

Psionic Echo

As the githzerai purged their negative emotions, so too did their disciplined minds leave imprints on Fortress Graystone. Literally a reflection of raw mental power, psionic echoes appear as spectral githzerai warriors. A psionic echo forces itself into existence by sheer will. While it manifests, it is as solid and real as any other physical object, though it continues to appear hazy and translucent.

Githzerai Psionic Echo **Level 9 Soldier**
Medium elemental humanoid XP 400

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 25; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22
Speed 7

⊕ **Unarmed Strike** (standard; at-will)
+16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.

⊕ **Lesser Mindstrike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Range 10; +14 vs. Will; 1d10 + 9 psychic damage.

⸸ **Psionic Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**
+14 vs. Will; 2d8 + 9 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage; until the end of its next turn, the target has vulnerable 10 psychic.

Iron Mind (immediate interrupt; when the githzerai psionic echo would be hit by an attack; encounter)
The githzerai psionic echo gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

Unstable Manifestation (immediate reaction; when the githzerai psionic echo takes damage; encounter)
The githzerai psionic echo becomes insubstantial until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 11 (+4)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 20 (+9)

Psionic Echo Tactics

Psionic echoes single out a weaker target and use *psionic strike* to make them more vulnerable to *mindstrikes*. It usually waits until it is bloodied to use *unstable manifestation*.

Stonewalker Spirit

Stonewalker spirits are conjured from the Elemental Chaos, and are incorporeal in their natural form. Little more than an elemental consciousness, a stonewalker spirit can pass into earth or rock to create a body for itself. Statues are the favored bodies of stonewalker spirits.

Stonewalker Spirit **Level 7 Lurker**
Medium elemental magical beast (earth) XP 300

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20
Immune disease, petrification, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Speed fly 6 (hover)

⊕ **Spectral Grasp** (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Petrifying Touch** (standard; recharge ⚅)
+10 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Save*: The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save*: The target is petrified (no save), and is considered to be a statue for the purposes of the *possess statue* ability.

Possess Statue (free, when entering the same space as a statue; at-will)
The stonewalker spirit assumes the form of a possessed statue. Use the possessed statue stat block instead of the stonewalker spirit's stat block. The spirit can leave the statue as a free action.

Flee the Form (free, when a possessed statue is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will)
The stonewalker spirit takes 16 damage (ignores insubstantial) as it reverts to its normal form, then moves up to its speed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Primordial
Skills Stealth +11
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)

Stonewalker Spirit Tactics

Stonewalker spirits want to be in possessed statue form when possible. If no statue is available, the spirit uses *petrifying touch* to create one.

Wicked Fang Gnolls

The Wicked Fang are a pack of gnoll mercenaries whose thirst for blood is equaled only by their greed. Initially consisting of little more than Fangren and his closest allies, the pack's dealings with operatives of the shadar-kai Sarshan have seen its numbers swell.

Wicked Fang Scout **Level 7 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +10, low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 7

⊕ **Shadar-Kai Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage (crit 1d6 + 15), or 1d6 + 11 damage (crit 1d6 + 17) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

⊕ **Hand Crossbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage, or 1d6 + 11 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Cowardly Shot (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires hand crossbow; ranged 10/20; +12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage, or 1d6 + 11 damage while bloodied; the gnoll scout can shift 2 squares both before and after making the attack; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll scout deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the scout's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts

Wicked Fang Scout Tactics

Wicked Fang scouts prefer to fight from range, using *cowardly shot* to leap out from behind cover, make an attack, and then retreat back behind cover.

Wicked Fang Sentry **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11, low-light vision
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17), or 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19) while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll sentry's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Defend the Pack (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 1; +12 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage, or 1d12 + 7 damage while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll sentry's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Defensive Lure (move; encounter)
The gnoll sentry shifts 3 squares, then pulls all targets it has marked 3 squares.

Pack Attack
The gnoll sentry deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll sentry's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

Wicked Fang Sentry Tactics

Wicked Fang sentries use *defend the pack* frequently to mark multiple enemies, attempting to make enemies focus on them. If a marked enemy tries to move away, the sentry uses *defensive lure* to draw them back into the area.

More Monsters

For more information on some of the monsters used in this adventure, see Ari Marmell's *Creature Incarnations: Gnolls* from *Dragon* #369 (which includes more information on the ruin-touched gnolls and the slaughterfang hyenas) and Robert J. Schwalb's *Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Yeenoghu* (which includes the crocotta) from *Dragon* #364.

Wicked Fang Mauler **Level 7 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Backhand (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
+10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 damage, or 1d6 + 10 damage while bloodied, and the target is knocked prone; see also *pack attack*.

Beat Back (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage (crit 1d12 + 20), or 1d12 + 10 damage (crit 1d12 + 22) while bloodied, and the target is pushed 2 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll mauler deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll mauler's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Athletics +12
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

Wicked Fang Mauler Tactics

Wicked Fang maulers are frequently used to defend other gnolls, using *beat back* to keep enemies from getting too close. If the mauler and its target are close to hazardous terrain, it uses *backhand* to knock the target into that area.

Wicked Fang Lasher **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 93; **Bloodied** 46
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21
Speed 7

Barbed Whip (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage (or 1d8 + 6 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 5 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

Whip Flay (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage (or 3d8 + 9 damage while bloodied) and ongoing 10 damage (save ends); see also *pack attack*.

Drag Around (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires barbed whip; reach 2; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage (or 2d8 + 7 damage while bloodied) and the target slides 3 squares; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll lasher deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll lasher's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Stealth +14
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment: hide armor, barbed whip

Wicked Fang Lasher Tactics

The Wicked Fang lasher uses *whip flay* against a bloodied opponent when possible, trying to bring them down quickly. When an enemy gets close, the lasher uses *drag around* to maneuver the enemy into a place where other gnolls can get *pack attack* bonuses.

Wicked Fang Keeper **Level 8 Elite Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 178; **Bloodied** 89
AC 24; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Rain of Blades (standard; at-will)
The keeper makes three handaxe attacks, each of which must be against a different target.

No Escape This Time (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires short sword; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17), or 2d6 + 7 damage (crit 1d6 + 19) while bloodied and the target is knocked prone; see also *pack attack*.

Keeper's Shackles (minor; recharge ⚅)
Targets adjacent prone creature; +12 vs. Fortitude; target is restrained (until escape).

Caltrops (minor; encounter)
The keeper can designate a 1-square burst area within 5 squares; that area is filled with caltrops. Until the end of the encounter, any creature that enters a square filled with caltrops without treating it as difficult terrain takes 1d6 + 4 damage.

Pack Attack
The keeper deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the keeper's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +11
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+6)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai short sword

Wicked Fang Keeper Tactics

The Wicked Fang warden primarily concerns itself with keeping enemies hemmed in close to allies. As such, it uses *caltrops* to block off one avenue of escape. The Wicked Fang warden attempts to use *no escape this time* to knock enemies prone before restraining them with *keeper's shackles*.

Wicked Fang Guard **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 250

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19), or 1d12 + 9 damage (crit 1d12 + 21) while bloodied, and the target is marked until the end of the gnoll guard's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Pinning Attack (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greatsword; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 7 damage (crit 1d12 + 19), or 1d12 + 9 damage (crit 1d12 + 21) while bloodied, and the target is immobilized until the end of the gnoll guard's next turn; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll guard deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll guard's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 8 (+2)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

Wicked Fang Guard Tactics

The Wicked Fang guards engage as many enemies as possible, using *pinning attack* when foes attempt to escape.

Wicked Fang Recruit **Level 8 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 88

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 7

Shadar-Kai Greatsword (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. AC; 8 damage, or 10 damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll recruit deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll recruit's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Equipment: hide armor, shadar-kai greatsword

Wicked Fang Recruit Tactics

Wicked Fang recruits do their best to swarm their enemies. They always try to keep at least two recruits adjacent to a target at all times, giving other Wicked Fang pack members a pack attack bonus.

Wicked Fang Warmaster **Level 8 Brute (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 350

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Warmaster's Aura aura 5; the gnoll warmaster gains a +1 bonus to AC and all defenses for each ally within the aura (maximum +5)
HP 107; **Bloodied** 53
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20
Speed 7

Wicked Fang (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage (crit 3d8 + 24), or 2d8 + 10 (crit 3d8 + 26) damage while bloodied; see also *pack attack*.

Forward the Wicked Fang (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires *Wicked Fang*; +11 vs. AC; 4d8 + 8 damage (crit 3d8 + 40), or 4d8 + 10 damage (crit 3d8 + 42) while bloodied, and all gnoll allies within the warmaster's aura make a basic attack; see also *pack attack*.

Pack Attack
The gnoll warmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll warmaster's allies adjacent to it.

Wicked Fang Power (free; when an attack with the weapon keyword hits; daily)
The target also takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +10
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 14 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+5)
Equipment: hide armor, *Wicked Fang* (see page 96)

Wicked Fang Warmaster Tactics

Wicked Fang warmasters try to keep as many allies within the range of *warmaster's aura* as possible. They use *forward the wicked fang* early, preferably when many other pack members are nearby.

Appendix 2: New Items

The following new magic items are featured in this adventure, and can be claimed as treasure by the PCs.

Figurines of Wondrous Power

Elderwood Falcon **Level 10**

This wooden statuette depicts a falcon with wings outspread.

Wondrous Item 5,000 gp

Power (Daily ✦ Conjuration): Standard Action. Use this figurine to conjure an ancient falcon of the Feywild (see below for statistics). As a free action, you can spend a healing surge when activating this item to give the creature temporary hit points equal to your healing surge value.

Elderwood Falcon
Medium natural animate

Initiative as conjurer **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision

HP 15; **Bloodied** 7
AC 24; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22
Speed 6, fly 8

⊕ **Talons** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage.

⸸ **Swoop** (standard; at-will)
The elderwood falcon shifts 1 square, makes a talon attack, then shifts 1 square.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 11 (+5)	**Dex** 19 (+9)	**Wis** 18 (+9)
Con 16 (+8)	**Int** 2 (+1)	**Cha** 8 (+4)

Ironwood Hound **Level 10**

This wooden statuette depicts a hunting hound dashing toward its prey.

Wondrous Item 5,000 gp

Power (Daily ✦ Conjuration): Standard Action. Use this figurine to conjure a yellow-furred hunting hound (see below for statistics). As a free action, you can spend a healing surge when activating this item to give the creature temporary hit points equal to your healing surge value.

Ironwood Hound
Medium natural animate

Initiative as conjurer **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision

HP 15; **Bloodied** 7
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21
Speed 6

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

⸸ **Drive Back** (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and the ironwood hound can shift 2 squares. The ironwood hound must end its shift adjacent to the target's new position.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 13 (+6)	**Dex** 12 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 18 (+9)	**Int** 2 (+1)	**Cha** 8 (+4)

Wicked Fang

The sword known as *Wicked Fang* was crafted as a gift for the gnoll pack of the same name. Sarshan ordered his shadar-kai warriors to travel to Overlook and kidnap one of the greatest dwarven weaponsmiths in the city, bringing him back to the Shadowfell to do the arms dealer's bidding. Sarshan commanded the weaponsmith to craft *Wicked Fang*. When the job was done, Sarshan ordered the weaponsmith killed and his blood used in the ritual that bestowed the sword with its magical properties.

The completed sword was sent back to the world as a gift to Fangren, who in turn gave it to his most trusted warmaster. However, before the weapon was sent from the Shadowfell, several of the shadar-kai witches in Sarshan's service warned him that the weapon was destined to be at the center of great events, and urged him to not let the weapon pass from his possession. Sarshan ignored the witches' warnings, sending his lieutenant Kyrion to train the gnolls in the proper use of shadar-kai weapons, including *Wicked Fang*.

Quest Ideas

The Vengeful Family: The family of the dwarf weaponsmith from Overlook has learned of the existence of *Wicked Fang* and seeks to reclaim it. When they discover that the PCs have the weapon, they assume the party was involved in the weaponsmith's death, vowing vengeance against them. The PCs must clear their names and convince the dwarves that their loved one has already been avenged.

The Cursed Blade: Bad luck (of the DM's design) seems to follow the PC carrying *Wicked Fang*, and he or she learns that the blade holds a dark curse. The PC's only hope is to travel to an ancient holy site of Moradin and beseech the god of creation to remove the curse from the weapon.

Tipping the Scales of War: The shadar-kai witches were right in their prophecy, and as the PCs find themselves caught up in further adventures, they discover that *Wicked Fang* was created for a higher purpose. Having fallen into the PCs' hands as a part of their destiny, the weapon is the only thing that can destroy an enemy they will one day face.

Wicked Fang **Level 13**

This weapon's jagged blade seems permanently stained with the blood of those it has slain.

Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Longsword
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d8 damage per plus
Property: Whenever you use a power with the weapon keyword that deals ongoing damage, increase that ongoing damage by an amount equal to the weapon's enhancement bonus.
Power (Daily): Free action. Use this power when you hit with an attack with the weapon keyword. In addition to the normal effects of the attack, the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Level 23 or 28: Ongoing 15 damage.

EPIC

21–30

Tomb of the Sand King's Daughter

"And they bade their slaves, 'Build unto us tombs to rival the palaces of the gods, for there shall we live our lives and sleep our deaths in splendor.' And the people of Maru-Qet wore their fingers down, broke their backs, burst their hearts to obey. Indeed they raised up great tombs to rival the palaces of the gods. And their masters were well pleased, for it was as gods they saw themselves."

by Ari Marmell

illustrations by Carl Frank and William O'Connor
cartography by Sean Macdonald

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This adventure, designed for five 25th-level PCs, presents the lair of Urum-Shar, youngest daughter of an ancient brown dragon. As much a location description as an adventure, "Tomb of the Sand King's Daughter" is intended to serve a number of purposes. It expands upon and gives context to one of the sample lairs presented in the *Draconomicon*, as well as making use of the new material from that supplement. This adventure also serves as a model for what a dungeon crawl might look like at the epic tier. And, of course, it's meant to provide several evenings of challenging entertainment.

Possession of the *Draconomicon* can greatly enhance the usefulness and flavor of the material presented here, but it's not essential. You can play with just the *Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, and *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Adventure Background

Long ago, before the rise of Nerath, or even Arkhosia, the great dynastic empire of Maru-Qet thrived. Here, in this lush and fertile region, humanoids lived in eternal subservience to their draconic overseers, a dynasty of brown dragons. For thousands of years, the empire grew, and none could stand against it.

None, that is, until the last pharaoh, the great brown dragon Nefermandias, declared war on a neighboring clan of dragons. As a result of that disastrous war, Maru-Qet is nothing now but a hot and windswept desert, blasted and ruined. Only a few struggling city-states and a handful of nomadic tribes prove that anyone once dwelt here. (For more on Maru-Qet and Nefermandias, see *Draconomicon* 240.)

Several of the brown dragons survived the fall of their domain, however. Nefermandias is said to be one of them. Another was Urum-Shar, the pharaoh's youngest child. The children of Nefermandias were infamous—even more than their father—for lusting after the luxuries their authority gave them. Urum-Shar was no exception. Even as compared to other chromatic dragons of note, she was avaricious beyond the nightmares of mortal beings. It is said that her tomb is a repository not only of riches, but also of ancient secrets and powerful magic unknown to modern times.

Construction of the Tomb

Tradition far older than Nefermandias dictated that the ruling dragons of Maru-Qet dwell in their own tombs. Although the originators of that tradition might have intended it as a humbling reminder of mortality, by the time of the empire's fall, it was considered a means to ensure that each dragon shared the same comforts in death that it had grown accustomed to in life.

Obviously, such rich lairs had to be guarded against intrusion—but by Urum-Shar's time, the threat of theft was all but forgotten. Who would dare to raid the tomb of a living god? Urum-Shar and her siblings transformed the construction of their tombs into a contest of status. Each dragon came up with the most elaborate and creative defenses and death traps, earning great respect from the others. Efficiency was cast aside in their quest to create ever more ornate mechanisms of death.

Even today, though the ancient wyrm spends most of her time sulking quietly in the lowest levels of her tomb, dreaming of better days long lost, Urum-Shar maintains her defenses. She does so out of pride, and as an occasional source of amusement. The rare few who dare to brave her tomb seldom emerge whole.

Adventure Hooks

Consider one of the following hooks, all of which fit in well with Urum-Shar's persona and should be more than enough to inspire a visit to her tomb.

✦ **Urum-Shar's Hoard:** Urum-Shar's hoard is an excellent location to place any object the PCs must acquire to accomplish a larger task. It can also be a fine place for an epic artifact that you wish to introduce into your campaign. She might possess one of the artifacts presented in the *DMG*, or perhaps one of the dragon-themed artifacts that appears in *Draconomicon*.

✦ **Resurgence of Maru-Qet:** Although she spends most of her time in her lair, Urum-Shar does venture out to hunt. But what if she began to make forays beyond the borders of Maru-Qet? Why would she suddenly end her centuries-old isolation, and what is she planning to do now that she's active once more? Given how she misses the perks of ruling a nation of subservient humanoids, no plan she concocts can possibly be good for those who dwell anywhere within her reach. It is possible that her ancient father, Nefermandias, the Forsaken Pharaoh (*Draconomicon* 240), has some influence on the situation.

✦ **The Lost:** It's possible that Urum-Shar could have her minions kidnap a person important to the PCs, or a person the PCs need for some reason. The ancient dragon is interested in old lore and new designs fro her tomb. Perhaps she seeks some secret to make Maru-Qet great again.

Getting to the Tomb

Ancient Maru-Qet is a harsh desert. Stone ruins of the old empire emerge from the desert's sands. Most are empty shells, the bones of Maru-Qet's forgotten corpse. However, some serve as shelter to the region's nomadic tribes or as home to monstrous inhabitants. None of these occupied buildings stand within a mile of the tomb itself, however.

Divination

Divination rituals work fine with reference to the tomb, but Urum-Shar doesn't want powerful foes finding their way through her tomb by using divination rituals. If the characters wait more than 10 minutes between entering any chamber and moving its lever, they trigger the room's tactical encounter even if they select the correct position for the lever. This ensures that explorers cannot simply enter a room, perform a ritual such as Hand of Fate, and safely pass through the tomb.

Scrying

A 27th-level variant of the Forbiddance ritual protects the entirety of the tomb. No form of scrying works beyond line of sight within the tomb, unless cast in area 19.

Teleportation

It's possible for the PCs to learn that Urum-Shar's lair has a permanent teleportation circle within, and maybe even the sigil sequence of that circle. If they do learn this fact, they can try to use the sigil sequence to teleport to the tomb. As they begin the teleportation ritual, a successful DC 28 Arcana check allows the ritual's performer to discern subtle energy manipulating the ritual's flow. Another successful DC 31 Arcana check reveals that this fluctuation could alter the teleportation ritual's destination.

Those who complete such a ritual end up at the foot of the surface pyramid instead of the intended teleportation circle. Urum-Shar becomes aware of the arrival of intruders instantly in this case. She's content, however, to allow the fools to try their luck with the trap gauntlet of the upper tomb.

The teleportation circle in Urum-Shar's lair allows passage only to her. Due to the Forbiddance, no teleportation effects can carry someone else into, or out of, any level of the tomb, with the exception her travel to and from area 21. Inside the tomb, short-range teleportation within line of sight functions normally, but teleportation beyond line of sight, even as simple as from one side of a wall to the other, fails.

Running the Upper Tomb

No single map is presented of this level, because it does not retain a specific shape. Rather, each of the twelve main chambers has only one entry door, and that door can potentially exit to any one of four other rooms. (See the accompanying chart.)

Light

Except where noted otherwise, the lair is dark. The room descriptions assume the PCs have ample light. Modify those descriptions when this isn't the case.

Moving Rooms

The entire structure is an eldritch machine. Each time the PCs open a door to a chamber, they are confronted with a blank stone wall. After a moment, accompanied by the sound of tremendous grinding stones, the wall appears to rotate aside, revealing the room beyond. The entire area is moving into position, so that its single entrance lines up with the door the PCs have selected. After a few moments—long enough for the PCs to enter—the room rotates away from the door, leaving a blank wall with no apparent exit.

It is not possible to block or prop open the doorway. The magic that turns and raises the rooms is strong enough to move hundreds of tons of rock. Nothing the PCs can provide can stand up to that sort of power. The fact that magic provides the movement means that the mechanism isn't subject to disruption, short of destroying the entire pyramid.

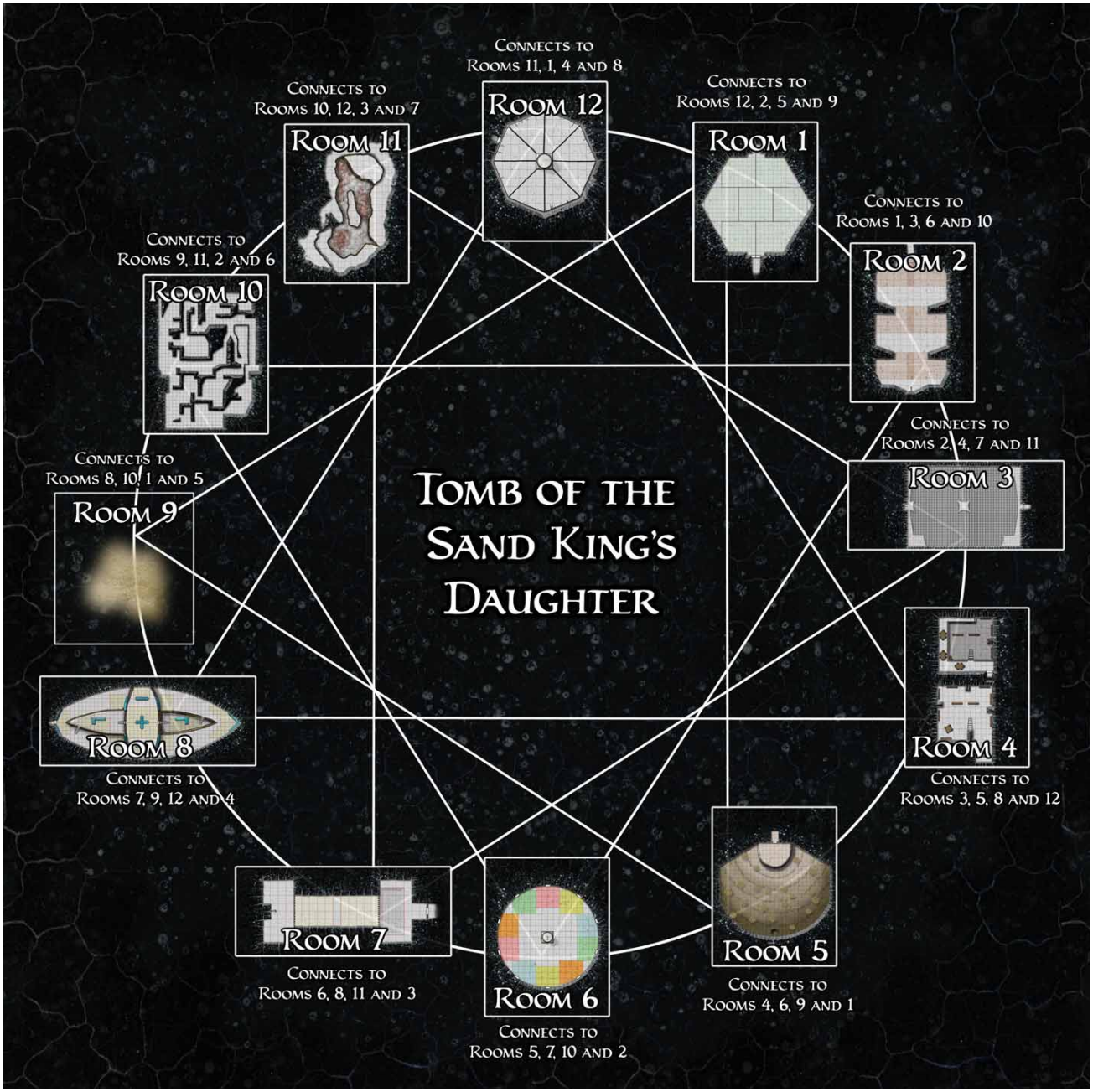
None of the doors are locked when the PCs enter a chamber. In many of the rooms, however, the doors lock themselves when the encounter triggers. Each "Features of the Area" section in the tactical encounters describes the state of the doors.

Each individual chamber within the upper level is separated from every other chamber by dozens of feet of solid rock. Thus, the Passwall ritual is not a viable means of bypassing any of the rooms.

Levers

Each room contains a lever, one with four possible positions. When the room is between exits, the lever sits in a neutral position between the four points. All the PCs need do is move the lever to one of the four positions. This causes the room to rotate and allow access to the hall that leads either to the room the PCs just came from, or one of three others.

Nothing on a lever indicates which position corresponds to its destinations. Finding a way through the complex is largely a matter of trial and error.


Tomb of the Sand King's Daughter
Room 12
Connects to Rooms 11, 1, 4 and 8
Room 11
Connects to Rooms 10, 12, 3 and 7
Room 1
Connects to Rooms 12, 2, 5 and 9
Room 2
Connects to Rooms 1, 3, 6 and 10
Room 10
Connects to Rooms 9, 11, 2 and 6
Room 3
Connects to Rooms 2, 4, 7 and 11
Room 9
Connects to Rooms 8, 10, 1 and 5
Room 4
Connects to Rooms 3, 5, 8 and 12
Room 8
Connects to Rooms 7, 9, 12 and 4
Room 5
Connects to Rooms 4, 6, 9 and 1
Room 7
Connects to Rooms 6, 8, 11 and 3
Room 6
Connects to Rooms 5, 7, 10 and 2

Even worse, the tomb has only one safe route through it. Urum-Shar's servants are taught this path, enabling them to go from area 1, to 2, to 3, all the way through, in order. In each room, pushing the lever to open the door to the next sequential room is perfectly safe.

Pushing the lever to any other position, and thus moving through the tomb out of order, causes the trap in the room to become active. In some rooms, moving the lever to the wrong position is enough to trigger the tactical encounter. In others, it merely readies a trap, which activates later.

Resetting

Part of the magic of the pyramid allows Urum-Shar to reset the traps once they're triggered. This is a time-consuming process in which she engages only on occasion. As far as the PCs are concerned, each trap functions only once. If the PCs return to a room with an encounter they've dealt with, they are safe unless you decide otherwise.

Resting

Halls between the moving chambers are empty, free of either traps or monstrous guardians. PCs can easily take an extended rest within one.

Customize This Adventure

"The Tomb of the Sand King's Daughter" is presented as a straightforward delve, so you might entice the PCs to explore it simply because it is there. By the time they've reached epic levels, though, characters have more pressing motives than a quest for yet more treasure and glory. Use the presented hooks as inspiration for how the tomb and its mighty inhabitant fit into your world and campaign—and with the PCs' goals and desires. In addition, consider Urum-Shar's treasure and servants as you place the tomb into your game. It's even possible that the pyramid from "Ziggurat Beyond Time" (*Dungeon* 157), which is part of a lower-level epic adventure, is somehow related to the pyramids of Maru-Qet and Urum-Shar's tomb.

Treasure

If the PCs start at 25th level, they're likely to reach 26th level before they enter the lower tomb. Little of the treasure is detailed, leaving lots of room for you to add treasure where you see fit—such as in area 12, where the beholder crystal can be a treasure, broken or whole. Some of the treasure should expand Urum-Shar's hoard in area 21, which contains parcels 1, 4, 6, and 8 from level 25. (Area 19 contains parcel 2 from level 25.) See *DMG* 129 for details on the parcels. The following parcels should be placed in the adventure, and you should change any treasure detailed in this adventure if it doesn't match the wish lists your players provided to you.

Party Level 25: Parcels 3, 5, 9, and 10 plus 500 pp.

Party Level 26: Place four parcels of your choice.

Slaves

A number of the dragon's slaves dwell in hollows within the cave containing the other teleportation circle mentioned in area 21. They come when called; otherwise, they leave their mistress alone. If the PCs have come seeking a captive, he or she is held there, not in the tomb itself.

One of Urum-Shar's slaves might be present in area 19 or 21, perhaps organizing the dragon's treasures. He or she cowers out of sight during the battle and can inform the PCs of the location of the cave. The PCs can then rescue any captives and inform the remaining slaves that they're free.

Approaching the Tomb

When the PCs first see the tomb, read:

You can see it from miles away. A pyramid, carved from reflective black stone, rises like a mountain toward the sky. Scale is difficult to determine against the featureless sand, but it must be at least 500 feet across.

Closer inspection reveals that the black blocks—each of which is several dozen feet long, and must weigh many tons—are utterly featureless. They appear not only undecorated, but also completely untouched by the centuries of wind and sand.

The entrance to the tomb isn't hidden, but the sheer size of the structure makes it difficult to find. It stands off-center along the south side, roughly 50 feet from the southeast corner.

When the PCs approach the door, read:

A double door, over a dozen feet from end to end, breaks the featureless black expanse of the pyramid. The portal appears to be brass, though it's almost certainly constructed of something stronger. On the rightmost door, a detailed bas-relief of a great dragon coils around itself to stare menacingly at you. On the left, the five-headed draconic form of Tiamat twines her necks around each other, casting her gaze in all directions.

The door requires a DC 31 Athletics check to break open, or a DC 26 Thievery check to unlock.

Entering the Tomb

When the PCs enter, read:

A long hall stretches out before you, its farthest reaches lost to darkness. Multiple columns support the ceiling, each carved with an image of a heavily muscled humanoid with a draconic head. The passage twists and turns, until it finally ends in a plain stone door.

The door is unlocked.

When the PCs open the door, read:

The door opens onto a blank expanse of dark stone. Before you can even begin to wonder, however, the corridor begins to vibrate, and you hear an incredibly loud grinding. After a second, you realize that the wall behind the door is moving. Soon an open doorway rotates into view.

As with all the doors on this level, it remains open for a few rounds before slowly rotating away again.

Upper Pyramid

The following entries detail the dozen areas that constitute the pyramid level of Urum-Shar's tomb.

1. The Sky Falls

The open doorway leads into a shallow niche along the wall of an enormous hexagonal chamber. Standing throughout are seven more of the dragon-headed humanoid statues. They stand with their palms flat against the ceiling, their elbows slightly bent.

When the PCs can see the opposite wall, read:

Another niche, deeper than the one containing the door, extends into the far wall. Two levers protrude from the wall within. The one on the left sits in a neutral position between four possible positions, shaped like a perfect cross. The other is a simple "up or down" lever. The up position is labeled in Draconic.

In the wall above the right lever is a strangely shaped slot, about a foot long and ranging from two to four inches thick.

If any PC can translate Draconic, the upper position on the rightmost lever reads, "If you have grown wise, you can still turn back."

Pulling the rightmost lever to that position causes the room to rotate so that the door leads back to the entry hall. Pulling it to the down position does nothing. This lever does not arm the room's trap.

The leftmost lever leads to the following areas.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 9
Down	Area 2
Right	Area 12
Left	Area 5

Once the PCs pull this lever, they hear another loud grinding, and the floor vibrates slightly. If the PCs move the lever to any position except down, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 1. The Sky Falls (page 69).

When the PCs exit the room, read:

You see a hallway beyond the door—similar but not identical to that which brought you into this chamber. Clearly, when you pulled the lever, the room rotated into a new position, allowing access to another passage.

You can use a similar description when the PCs exit any of the chambers. After the first few instances, you can assume the players know to expect a variety of hallways.

Delving Deeper

When they enter the tomb, the PCs can't do much with the strangely shaped slot above the second lever. It doesn't seem to lead anywhere, or contain any mechanisms.

In fact, it's built to hold the brass plaque found in area 8, a magic key-and-lock combination. Placing the plaque in the slot causes the plaque to lock in place, and Draconic writing to appear above the rightmost lever's down position. Those who can read Draconic translate it as, "You have won your way through. Come below, and receive your reward."

When a PC pulls the lever down, read:

Rather than the usual grinding, a strange shimmer appears in the center of the floor. The stone swirls open, like water running down a drain, to reveal a deep hole. Beyond the opening is a shaft with rungs cut in the side.

If the PCs have already dealt with the trap and golems in this room, they can watch as bits of stone and rubble go tumbling down the opening. This hole leads to the tomb level of the complex—see the Lower Tomb section for the descent.

2. Slash and Burn

You find yourself at one end of a bizarrely shaped hall. Unnecessarily wide throughout most of its length, it narrows at three distinct points, closing in at an angle from both sides. Horizontal lines of sparkling rock break the smooth surface of the wall. They run from the center of the odd protrusions to about 15 feet south along the wall.

Another four-position lever stands against the center of the south wall. When the PCs move close enough to the far lever, they might notice something else.

Passive Perception

DC 33 *You spot a faint rune etched into the southern wall, barely visible above the lever.*

The lever can open the following locations.

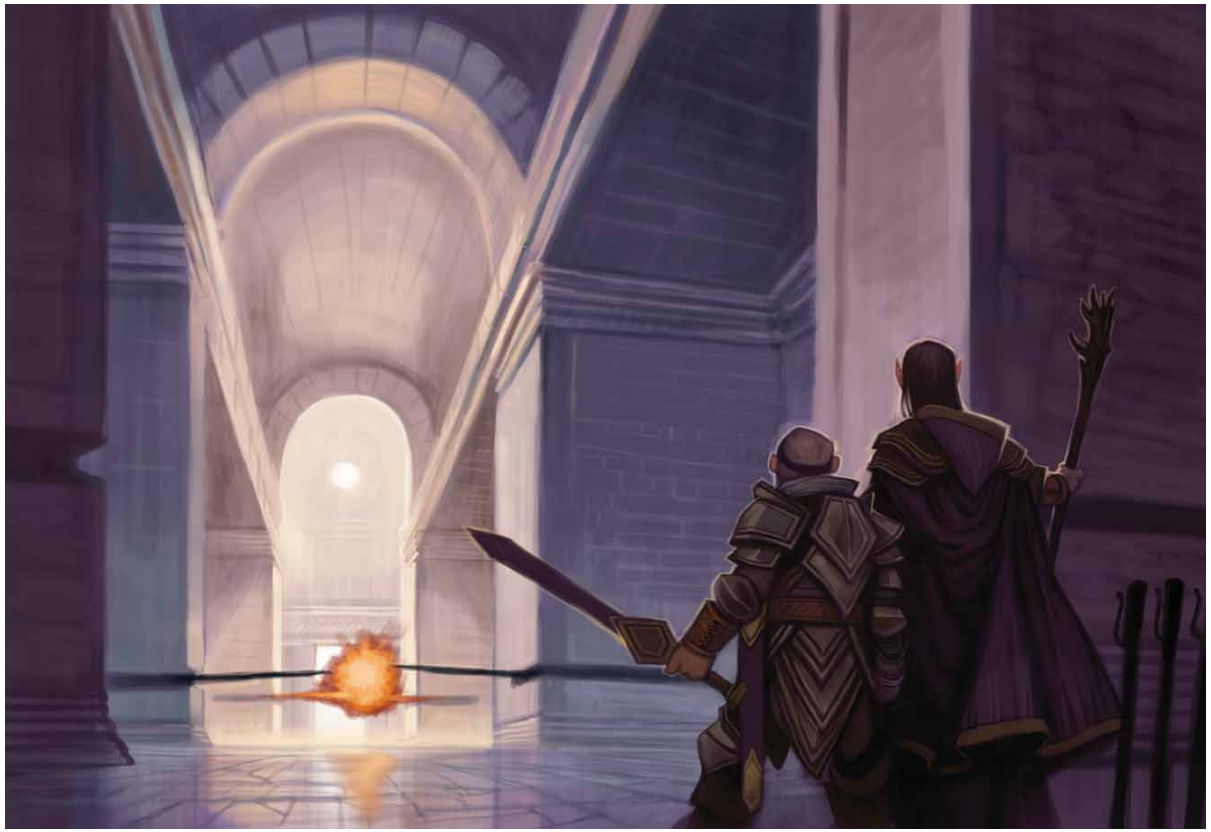
Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 3
Down	Area 10
Right	Area 6
Left	Area 1

PCs hear the familiar grinding once they pull the lever. If the PCs move the lever to any position except up, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 2. Slash and Burn (page 70).

3. Forest of Iron

The chamber before you is a rectangle, possibly 200 feet across. Only a few thin platforms—near the door, and in the center—are solid floor. The rest of the ground consists of the tops of hundreds of metal poles. Crossing the room on the poles without falling seems possible, but not easy. Roughly 10 feet down, a grid of razor-edged metal sheets connects the iron poles to one another.



Four statues like those you saw in the first chamber stand not far from you—two in the left corner, two in the right. On the platform in the center, stand statues of similar build, but far larger. Dust hangs in the air near this larger statue.

PCs can see the two other colossuses as soon as their lights reveal the creatures. The lever, located in the niche along the far wall, leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 11
Down	Area 2
Right	Area 4
Left	Area 7

If the PCs pull the lever to any position except right, or if they attack the statues before moving to the lever, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 3. Forest of Iron (page 71).

4. Paper Cuts

You arrive on the upper level of a library. To your left, several reading tables stand on a balcony that winds its way partly around the chamber. A staircase leads to a room below, full of smaller tables and over half a dozen bookcases.

Most of the books are histories of Maru-Qet, treatises on that nation's culture, discussions of the worship of Tiamat, or genealogies of various dragon bloodlines—including that of Nefermandias. This is an excellent place to include any information the PCs might be seeking in relation to other ongoing plotlines, or to seed hooks for future adventures.

The lever—which stands in the southeast branch of the room, and is not visible from the upper level—leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 3
Down	Area 5
Right	Area 8
Left	Area 12

Pulling the lever causes the room to rotate with the standard grinding sound, making a few of the books vibrate on their shelves. If the PCs pull the lever to any position except down, the tactical encounter begins. The tactical encounter also begins if the PCs attempt to deface or harm the library in any way.

Tactical Encounter: 4. Paper Cuts (page 73).

5. Hill of Agony

The door opens up onto a flat platform 25 feet above a steep slope. Above you, an orb of light imitates the sun in a noontime sky. The floor is painted green, with tiny etchings suggesting blades of grass. Scattered across the slope are over twenty brass sculptures of dead trees. At the base of this imitation hill, a circular hole leads into the ground.

Bright light illuminates the whole chamber. The exit lever is within the hole in the floor. See the tactical encounter for details on the hole. It leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 6
Down	Area 9
Right	Area 4
Left	Area 1

Pulling the lever to any position except up triggers the tactical encounter immediately.

Tactical Encounter: 5. Hill of Agony (page 74).

6. Going in Circles

This room is enormous and circular. A pedestal occupies its center, from which another level protrudes. The floor is covered with a pair of identical etchings of Tiamat's five-headed form. The two bodies face one another, their serpentine necks twining about each other into a complex knot of designs.

Oozing mounds of flesh, eyes, scales, and fangs crawl about on the floor near the central platform, each making a low growling and gurgling sound.

If the PCs attack the fleshy bits, which ignore them, the tactical encounter begins. The lever here leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 2
Down	Area 10
Right	Area 7
Left	Area 5

The tactical encounter begins if the PCs pull the lever to any position except right.

Tactical Encounter: 6. Going in Circles (page 76).

7. Dread Gates

This room seems to be nothing but a wide hall connecting two rectangular chambers.

When the PCs might see the lines for the arcane gates (the dots on the map), allow the following check.

Perception
DC 35 *The ceiling boasts a number of holes arrayed along a narrow slot, at the edge of the hall.*

When the PCs can see the far wall, read:

In addition to the usual lever, this wall boasts a pair of stone hands, cupping a brass plaque as if in offering. The plaque bears a relief of a dragon, like the one on the pyramid's outer door.

Perception
DC 20 *Looking at the plaque, it occurs to you that if it were turned on its back, with the dragon facing up, it would fit perfectly it into the slot you saw in the wall in the first chamber.*

The lever, located directly below the hands with the plaque, leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 6
Down	Area 3
Right	Area 11
Left	Area 8

Pulling the lever to any position except left triggers the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 7. Dread Gates (page 78).

8. Dire Reflections

Glittering light dances in this room, which is roughly oval and has multiple levels—platforms leading up to platforms, ledges to ledges. Along walls and freestanding atop the ledges, are a vast array of mirrors. The frequency of reflections makes the entire chamber feel impossibly large.

Bright light illuminates the whole room. The lever is located on the wall in the southeast, out of line of sight from the entryway. It leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 9
Down	Area 12
Right	Area 7
Left	Area 4

Pulling the lever to any position but up triggers the tactical encounter. Any attempt to damage the mirrors triggers the encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 8. Dire Reflections (page 80).

9. Bottled Sandstorm

You stand on the edge of a massive natural cavern. Rocks on the floor are broken and jagged, and the floor appears to be tightly packed sand.

This encounter has no tactical map. Tactical location isn't important during the skill challenge.

The lever for the cavern is located on the far wall, roughly 300 feet from the doorway. It leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 5
Down	Area 8
Right	Area 1
Left	Area 10

Pulling the lever to any position other than left triggers the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 9. Bottled Sandstorm (page 82).

10. Alone in the Dark

You see a large rectangular room beyond the door. The walls, floor, and ceiling are dirty but otherwise unmarked. The now-familiar lever stands against the far wall.

The trap here works by transporting the PCs temporarily to a place that exists in the same space as this room, but in the Shadowfell. Urum-Shar had her trap builders concentrate the shadow of the plane deeply here to form a strongly necrotic environment.

The lever leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 9
Down	Area 2
Right	Area 11
Left	Area 6

If the PCs pull the lever to the right, they hear the familiar grinding and can leave the room easily. If they pull the lever to any other position, they are immediately transported to Shadowfell double of this room, triggering the tactical encounter. Once they return, the room is still connected to the area that the PCs determined by pulling the lever.

Tactical Encounter: 10. Alone in the Dark (page 83).

11. Fire and Fog

A dry natural cavern stretches out before you. The ground rises and falls, but it's hard to see all the details. In its lowest reaches, the cavern is filled with a haze, much like that hanging in the air after a sandstorm.

Perception

DC 33: *In the haze, you can make out pockets of darker particles near the floor, as though a heavier vapor lay beneath.*

The lever is not visible from the door, since it lies on the western end of the cavern's lower section. It leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 12
Down	Area 7
Right	Area 3
Left	Area 10

Moving the lever to any position except up triggers the tactical encounter immediately, causing the living breaths to appear.

Tactical Encounter: 11. Fire and Fog (page 84).

12. Crystal Killer

This room is a perfect octagon. Faint lines on the floor divide the chamber into eight equal wedges. In the center of the room stands an empty stone pedestal. A niche on the far side of the room contains the chamber's lever.

Perception
DC 31 *You notice an odd seam around the edge of the room—the floor is circular rather than conforming to the octagonal room.*

Success on the Perception check allows the PCs to attempt the following check.

Dungeoneering
DC 30 *It seems that the floor isn't attached to the walls. It's possible this room can rotate or otherwise move away from the walls.*

The lever leads to the following locations.

Lever Position	Destination
Up	Area 4
Down	Area 1
Right	Area 11
Left	Area 8

Pulling the lever to any position other than down, or attacking the pedestal, triggers the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: 12. Crystal Killer (page 86).

Lower Tomb

The tomb proper is mapped out normally, and doesn't involve moving rooms or trapped levers—which is not to say that everything here is simple, or can be taken at face value. The following locations detail the areas on the lower level. Much of this information was first presented as a sample lair in the *Draconomicon*.
The PCs have no trouble descending the initial shaft.

When the PCs enter the hole, read:

The passage seems to fall away into infinity as you descend. The walls are of rough rock, chipped and sharp, as though someone broke away a portion of the earth through brute force.

Even stranger, however, is the sound. The great pit subtly vibrates, and the air is filled with a dull, grinding rush. It's as if a great torrent of water were flowing through pipes and passages in the surrounding earth.

When the PCs reach the end of the hole, read:

The passage opens up into a square chamber—though perhaps "cavern" might be a more apt description, given its enormous size. The strange reverberations you heard now have an obvious cause. A few yards north of you, a second hole in the ceiling releases a torrent of sand, a waterfall of grit pouring into the center of the chamber. There it sprays over the top of a massive ziggurat of black stone, a basalt monstrosity that dominates the cavern.

In areas 13 through 16, the sound of rushing sand imposes a –5 penalty to Perception checks to detect anything more than 1 square distant.

13. The Crown

If nothing else, this great underground ziggurat serves as evidence of Urum-Shar's twisted sense of grandeur.

When the PCs reach the top of the ziggurat, read:

To the south descends an impossibly steep staircase. On the other three sides, steep channels cut into the ziggurat direct the falling sand into veritable rivers that flow out into the cavern. The sand has accumulated alongside those channels and on the ziggurat's various ledges.

Perception
DC 37 *A thin seam runs along the edge of the platform that serves as the ziggurat's highest point.*

Optional Encounter

Encounter Level 25 (38,400 XP)
3 Maru-Qet colossuses (see area 3 for stats)

If you wish, run this encounter in the lower tomb area around the underground pyramid. Once the PCs spend a few minutes anywhere in the area, or if they damage the standing gigantic statues, those statues come to life. (The fallen statue remains inanimate.) They move to attack the intruders, making use of the sand sluices and torrents by pushing PCs into these hazards whenever possible. If the PCs move into area 17 or 19, the colossuses do not follow. They return to their positions of stony sleep until disturbed again.

Tomb of Urum Shar

1 square = 5 ft.

Features of the Area

Falling Sand: Anyone standing in the cascade is subject to the following attack every round: +29 vs. Fortitude; on a hit a character is knocked prone, as well as immobilized and unable stand up (save ends both). A prone character in the cascade is subject to suffocation (*DMG* 159). The area is difficult terrain.

Ledges: Each ledge of the ziggurat is 10 feet above the next (Athletics DC 20 to climb).

Sand Patches: These squares are difficult terrain.

Secret Door: The entirety of area 1 is a secret door that opens upward at an angle to prevent the falling sand from entering. This leads to another vertical passage that descends to area 19.

14. Sand Sluice

Three conduits channel the bulk of the sand to and through grates beneath bas-reliefs on the walls.

If the PCs examine the channels, read:

Sand rushes down these spillways in raging torrents. The channels continue along the floor beyond the ziggurat, carrying the sand toward strange brass figures on the cavern's far walls.

Features of the Area

Falling Sand: Anyone caught in a channel is subject to the following attack every round: +29 vs. Fortitude; on a hit a character is knocked prone, as well as immobilized and unable stand up (save ends both). The character slides 4 squares down the slope toward the bas-reliefs marked "a," "b," or "d." A prone character in the cascade is subject to suffocation (*DMG* 159). A character who reaches a bas-relief no longer slides but takes a -2 penalty to the saving throw to end the conditions. The area is difficult terrain.

15. The Plains of Stone

The great cavern contains more than just the ziggurat.

When the PCs examine the room, read:

The floor is made of reflective black stone that is as dark as obsidian and as hard as granite. No seams are visible between the floor and the stone ziggurat.

Features of the Area

Bas-Reliefs: In the center of each wall stands an exquisite 20-foot bas-relief carving of a dragon (marked on the map as "a," "b," "c," and "d"). Beneath each carving sits a large bronze grate through which the flowing sand disappears. Where it goes, only Urum-Shar or the deities can say.

Sand Patches: These squares are difficult terrain.

Statues: The statues (marked on the map as "e") are of dragon-headed humanoids with halberds. They stand 60 feet tall (Athletics DC 20 to climb.) The fallen statue (marked "f") is 15 feet high.

16. Descent

These stairs lead not to the dragon's lair but to a gauntlet of death traps.

When the PCs look down the stairs, read:

These steep steps lead down not merely to the floor, but through it, eventually ending at a set of massive double doors.

Each stair is 1 foot deep and 1 foot high. From this side, the double doors can be opened without a check.

17. The Murderous Depths

These stairs, and the chamber beyond, are nearly as deadly as Urum-Shar.

When the PCs enter, read:

The stairs descend into a seemingly infinite darkness. On either side, statues glare down at you like angry gods. Some are dragons, coiled around great stone pillars, and others resemble the dragon-headed humanoids you saw in the chamber upstairs. You can see nothing but darkness beyond the statues. The statues along the stairs sit on featureless pillars that rise from the floor to the level of the staircase, forming pedestals.

When the PCs see the area at the bottom, read:

At the base of the stairs, an array of pillars surrounds a dusty shrine. Staring from within the altar are half a dozen draconic skulls, crudely mortared into place.

Urum-Shar occasionally comes here to visit the shrine of skulls that she made from her slain enemies. Mostly, however, this chamber is meant to kill. Even her slaves do not know that her lair isn't hidden here. As far as the dragon is concerned, any who attempts to visit her without prior permission deserves death.

Refer to the tactical encounter for a map of the area and the traps. The tactical encounter begins when the PCs trigger any of the traps.

Tactical Encounter: 17. Stairway to Hell (page 87).

18. An Empty Darkness

This area is the vast, darkened chamber beyond the stairs and shrine of area 17. It is not fully shown on the map.

When the PCs explore, read:

Old bones lie scattered about, apparently those of prior explorers. Other than these and the bases of the massive statues, the darkened chamber appears to be empty.

This chamber isn't entirely a waste of the PCs' time. Urum-Shar is meticulous about gathering all valuables from those who fall victim to her traps, but she has missed something.

Treasure: If the PCs make a DC 30 Perception check, they find that one of the broken skeletons wears +6 *delver's scale armor.*

19. Inner Sanctum

The secret door in area 13 leads to a hole in the earth that is 20 feet wide and 60 feet deep. Unlike the entrance to the tomb level, this hole lacks a ladder.

When the PCs look through the hole, read:

Another large chamber waits below. Its floor seems to consist of tightly packed sand, though numerous rocky protrusions create a vast array of ledges around the room.

When the PCs can see the whole chamber, read:

On the south wall, a semicircular ledge—one of the few features that seems carved, rather than natural—overlooks a platform at the bottom of a short flight of stairs. The platform stands over a dark pit. At the rear of the ledge is a pair of heavy stone doors.

Urum-Shar uses the platform as an audience chamber. She sits on her ledge and glares down at visitors on the platform. Those who displease her are shoved off the edge to feed the dread wraith in area 8.

When the first PC enters the room, read:

You start briefly as a great winged beast—draconic but two legged—looms from the shadows on the ceiling. It takes you a second to realize that the hanging monstrosity is merely a sculpture, not a living being.

The sculpture, of an earthen wyvern, is one of the chamber's traps. The tactical encounter begins as soon as a PC enters the room.

Tactical Encounter: 19. Beneath the Sands (page 89).

20. The Pit

The pit is 40 feet deep. The dread wraith in the pit is mystically bound to this location and cannot leave.

When the PCs approach the pit, read:

A strange chill taints the air of this deep, dark pit, as though something unholy died within.

The wraith attacks the instant anyone enters the pit.

Tactical Encounter: 19. Beneath the Sands (page 89).

21. A Bed of Platinum

Though the PCs might not realize it, this corridor stands inside the structure that supports the stairs in area 17.

When the PCs enter this chamber, read:

Coins litter the floor, and various works of art stand displayed haphazardly against the walls. On the far wall is a 10-foot-diameter circle of runes, apparently carved directly into the rock by massive claws.

A DC 20 Arcana check reveals that the circle is one end of a set of teleportation portals; this chamber is the only place in the tomb where such magic functions.

An identical circle is carved in a rock hidden in a small desert cave over a mile away. Urum-Shar uses teleportation to enter and leave her lair.

Treasure: Urum-Shar's hoard includes a +6 *staff of power,* a *dragondaunt shield* (epic tier), 23 ad, 900 pp, a ruby mined from the Elemental Chaos and carved into a perfect replica of a dragon's eye (57,000 gp), the mithral wedding band of the ancient eladrin Queen Amathiel (43,000 gp), and 50,000 gp worth of rituals (include at least one dragon-specific ritual from *Draconomicon*). Any specific item the PCs are seeking, based on an adventure hook, should also be here.

Concluding the Adventure

The dragon is dead, the death traps defeated. For adventurers seeking another in a long line of challenges, that might be enough. For others, the prize they sought might have been found in the dragon's hoard, or among her slaves.

The PCs have also eliminated one of the most potent dragons in the world. Do other powers move in to claim her territory? Maru-Qet isn't prime real estate, but secrets remain to be found here. What of Nefermandias, the Forsaken Pharaoh? If he learns who slew his daughter, the PCs can expect terrible retribution.

1. The Sky Falls

Encounter Level 25 (39,641 XP)

Setup

7 stoneform golems (G)
7 force cascades

Provide the read-aloud text, then place the golems (**G**) as shown on the map. Roll initiative and the run combat normally. As soon as a golem is dropped, it triggers one of the traps.

Once a PC pulls the lever, read:

With the sound of stone grinding on stone, the statues turn their heads to face you. Slowly but inexorably, they begin moving. Even as they walk, even as they pull back one fist to attack, the other hand remains firmly pressed against the ceiling.

Use the skills noted in the trap statistics to allow the PCs an opportunity to sense the traps before one goes off. When one does go off, use the description in its statistics.

7 Stoneform Golems (G)	**Level 24 Minion**
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 1,513
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 37; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29	
Immune disease, poison, sleep	
Speed 6; can't shift.	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at will)	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 5 damage, and the target slides 4 squares.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 27 (+18)	**Dex** 7 (+8)	**Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 27 (+18)	**Int** 3 (+6)	**Cha** 3 (+6)

7 Force Cascades	**Level 22 Lurker**
Trap	XP 4,150 each

The ghostly shape of an enormous part of the ceiling crashes down, leaving the actual ceiling intact. When it strikes the floor, it explodes in a cascade of light.

Perception
✦ DC 28: The character sees faint blue lines of energy trace through the ceiling above the golems, brightest around each one's upraised hand. Succeeding on this check allows the Arcana check.

Arcana
✦ DC 30: The character discerns that golems aren't supporting the ceiling with their upraised hands. Instead, they're holding back a magical force, which could be unleashed if the creature stops touching the ceiling.

Dungeoneering
✦ DC 20: The character knows the ceiling is stable.

Trigger
If a golem is destroyed or falls away from the ceiling for any reason, the trap attacks, limited to the area noted on the map around the fallen golem.

Attack (Zone)
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 2
Targets: Creatures in the area
Attack: +25 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12 + 7 force damage
Miss: Half damage
Sustain Standard: The force cascade attacks each round, just after the initiative count of the PC whose action triggered the trap. It targets a square adjacent to the corner of the golem's original position, targeting a different square each round.

Countermeasures
✦ Arcana DC 24: After the trap triggers, a successful Arcana check stops the trap from triggering in one of the indicated areas only.
✦ Perception DC 24: The character who uses a minor action and succeeds on the check can see where the cascade falls next.
✦ *Dispel magic* against Will 35 ends the trap's effect.

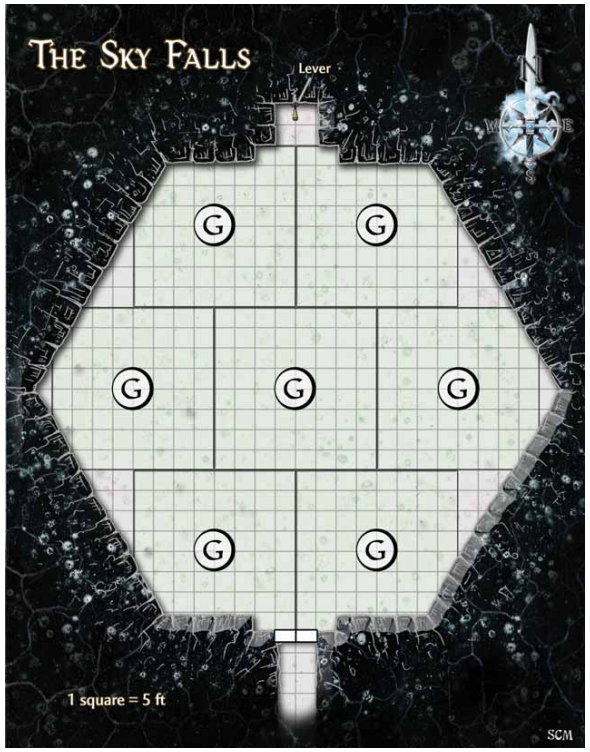
Tactics

The golems fight in a straightforward manner. A golem never willingly leaves the area that collapses if the golem is destroyed or knocked prone, and it keeps one hand on the ceiling as long as it is able. The golems are cunning enough to bat characters back and forth among the various areas to keep the party separated.

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 15 feet high.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).



2. Slash and Burn

Encounter Level 25 (41,600 XP)

Setup

6 radiant blades (S)
1 shooting star (see below)

No obvious setup needs to take place for this encounter. Once the PCs trigger the radiant blades traps (**S**), provide the read-aloud text and roll initiative for the shooting star. It shoots from the rune on the southern wall on its initiative count during round 2.

6 Radiant Blades (S) **Level 23 Lurker**
Trap XP 5,100 each

A blade of light sweeps straight out and then around, only to disappear back into the wall.

One trap consists of a blade with a reach of 3 squares that sweeps through an area adjacent to it.

Perception
No check is required to see lines of crystal powder on the wall, which are telltale signs of the trap.

Arcana
✦ DC 29: The character recognizes the line and what it means.

Trigger
When a PC enters any one of the six covered areas, all six traps attack as an immediate reaction. They then enter the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered it, attacking each round.

Attack (Radiant)
Immediate Reaction **Close** area marked on map
Special Those in areas where two blades overlap are subject to attack by both.
Targets: Each creature in area.
Attack: +27 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 9 radiant damage, and the target slides 5 squares toward the south.

Countermeasure
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 30: Standard action. An adjacent character can disarm the trap by ruining the crystal line.

Shooting Star **Level 27 Warder**
Trap XP 11,00 each

From a small rune, a burning boulder shoots across the room to slam into the door.

The trap is a single rune opposite a door in the room.

Perception
✦ DC 33: The character notices the rune.

Arcana
✦ DC 33: The character recognizes what the rune means.

Trigger
When a predetermined condition is met, the trap rolls initiative. It triggers on the following round.

Initiative +6

Attack (Fire)
Standard Action **Area** A path 3 squares wide down the center of the chamber
Targets: Each creature in area
Attack: +32 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d12 + 8 fire damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not knocked prone.
Effect: The trap leaves a red-hot boulder blocking the door.

Countermeasures
✦ Arcana DC 29: Standard action. An adjacent character can delay the trap for one round by interfering with the rune.
✦ Arcana DC 33: Standard action. An adjacent character can disarm the trap by ruining the rune.
✦ Athletics DC 28: Move action. An adjacent character can move the boulder 1 square, taking 2d12 fire damage. If the character uses a tool to move the boulder (DM discretion), the DC increases to 32, but the boulder deals no damage to that character.

When a PC triggers the radiant blade trap, read:

From the thin, sparkling lines in the walls, massive arcs of red light sweep forth. The arcs just barely scissor past each other, and then both swing toward the south, only to vanish once more into the wall.

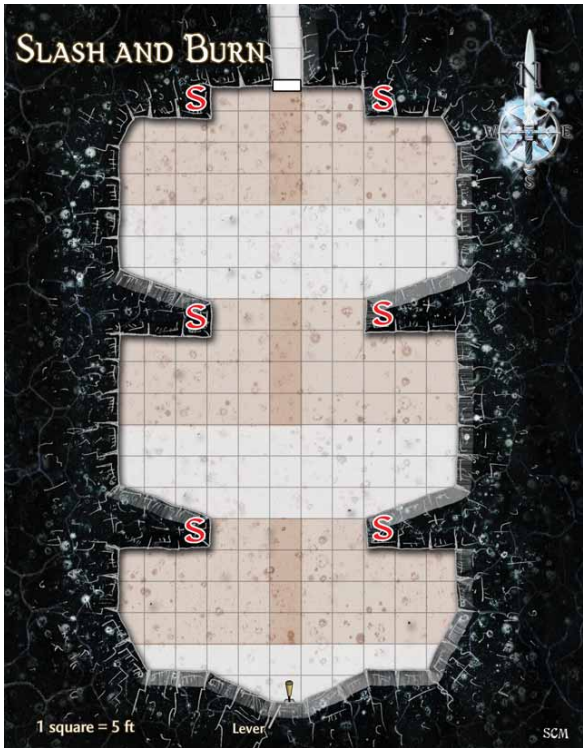
When the shooting star fires, read:

A blazing ball spins from the south wall, just above the lever. It careens down the center of the hall, smashing aside all in its path, until it slams against the door at the far end. Instantly, the flames die, leaving a glowing-hot boulder blocking the exit.

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 10 feet high.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock). The door cannot be opened while the boulder from the shooting star trap is in the way.



3. Forest of Iron

Encounter Level 26 (46,000 XP)

Setup

3 Maru-Qet colossuses (C)
4 stoneform golems (G)

Provide the read-aloud text, place the colossuses (**C**) and golems (**G**) on the map, and roll initiative. The difficulty of the terrain grants 1,548 extra XP for this encounter.

When the constructs activate, read:

The great statues step from their spots with the dull grinding of stone and begin striding across the room. Though the iron poles tremble beneath the weight, the poles do not give.

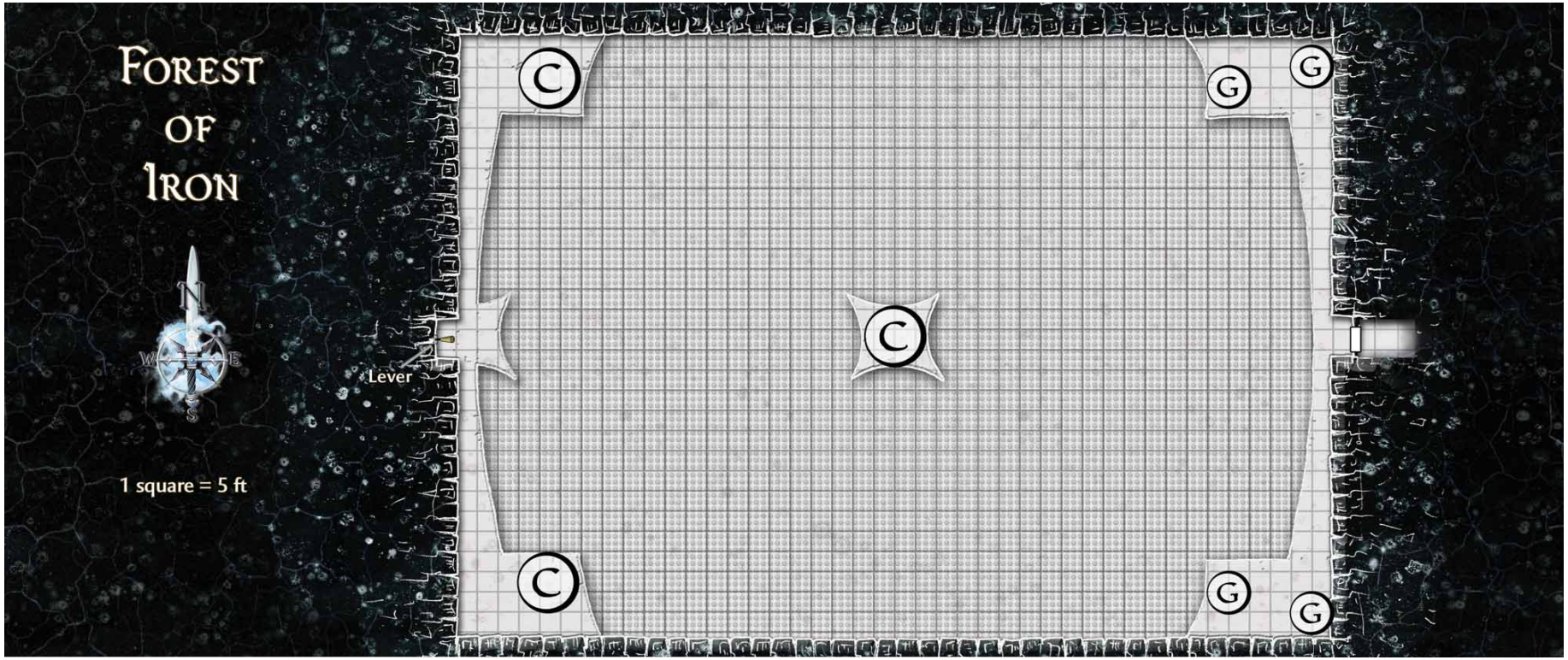
7 Stoneform Golems (G)	**Level 24 Minion**
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 1,513
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 37; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29	
Immune disease, poison, sleep	
Speed 6; can't shift.	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at will)	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 5 damage, and the target slides 4 squares.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 27 (+18)	**Dex** 7 (+8) **Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 27 (+18)	**Int** 3 (+6) **Cha** 3 (+6)

Tactics

Initially, the creatures move so they can block access to the door. The stoneform golems move at half speed so they won't fall.

Anytime a golem hits a target, the golem slams that target toward the golem's nearest ally, as long as that's not closer to the door. Similarly, a colossus uses its attacks to knock creatures back away from the door.

A colossus focuses almost exclusively on melee attacks. It resorts to ranged attacks only if it can't move to within reach of a foe and make a melee attack on a given turn. It saves its action point to use *flaying whirlwind* and a slam on one turn when it has multiple PCs within reach.



3 Maru-Qet Colossuses (C)	Level 24 Elite Brute
Huge natural animate (construct)	XP 12,800 each

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
Flaywind Aura aura 3; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 15 damage and –2 to Fortitude until the start of its next turn.
HP 558; **Bloodied** 279
AC 38; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 38
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Resist** 25 fire, 25 cold
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Point 1

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at will)
Reach 3; +27 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and the colossus makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* The colossus wraps up the target in its massive hand; +25 vs. Fortitude; the target is restrained (save ends).

Defensive Strike (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves adjacent to the Maru-Qet colossus; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)
+27 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage. If the attack hits, the colossus makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +25 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 5 squares, knocked prone, and dazed until the end of the Maru-Qet colossus's next turn.

Flaywind Bolt (standard; at will)
Ranged 15; +25 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and blinded (save ends).

Flaying Whirlwind (standard; encounter)
Close burst 3; +24 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target slides 3 squares and is knocked prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 30 (+22)	**Dex** 25 (+19)	**Wis** 27 (+20)
Con 25 (+19)	**Int** 3 (+9)	**Cha** 3 (+9)

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 25 feet high.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Iron Poles: Most of the "floor" in this chamber consists of the tops of dozens upon dozens of iron poles. The poles are difficult terrain to the PCs and the golems, but not to the colossuses. Large or smaller creatures might fall between the poles.

A character can attempt to move at normal speed by succeeding on a DC 26 Acrobatics check to balance. Similarly, a character who is knocked prone or subjected to forced movement must succeed on a DC 21 Acrobatics check. Unlike with the normal balance check above, any failure on this latter check results in a fall.

A character who falls between the poles drops 20 feet to land atop a sharp metal grid, taking 4d10 damage. Climbing back up to the top of the poles requires a DC 21 Athletics check, since a character can brace against two poles to climb. A character can walk across the top of the sharpened metal floor between the poles (difficult terrain), but doing so deals 1d4 damage per square.

4. Paper Cuts

Encounter Level 25 (36,300 XP)

Setup

3 book storms (B)
3 symbols of insanity

Provide the read-aloud text and place the book swarms on the map. Do not place the symbols until they appear later in the encounter.

When the books come to life, read:

Dozens of tomes and scrolls fly from the shelves. They swirl together into a whirlwind of parchment and leather, which immediately begins storming toward you.

When a book swarm is destroyed, a component tome falls open atop the remains, revealing a symbol of insanity. Choose one of the four swarm squares as the location of the trap.

3 Book Storms (B)	**Level 24 Soldier**
Large natural animate (swarm)	XP 6,050 each
Initiative +24	**Senses Perception** +20; blindsight 20
Swarm Attack aura 1; the book storm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.	
HP 225; **Bloodied** 112	
AC 40; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36	
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Resist** half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks, 15 fire	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 12 (hover)	
ⓘ **Slicing Pages** (standard; at will)	
Reach 0; +26 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 9 damage, ongoing 5 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the book storm's next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 10 (+12)	**Dex** 30 (+22) **Wis** 27 (+20)
Con 25 (+19)	**Int** 2 (+8) **Cha** 3 (+8)

3 Symbols of Insanity	**Level 24 Warder**
Trap	XP 6,050 each
This glyph squirms when looked upon, paining an observer's mind even from a distance.	
Perception	
No check is required to see the symbol.	
Religion	
✦ DC 29: The character recognizes the nature of the symbol.	
Trigger	
When a creature approaches within 3 squares of the symbol, the trap attacks. Once a creature has entered the area, it can remain in the area without triggering further attacks.	
Attack (Charm, Psychic)	
Opportunity Action	**Close** burst 3
Attack: +27 vs. Will	
Hit: 1d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dominated (save ends). The affected creature is driven to attack its allies.	
Countermeasures	
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 27: Standard action. An adjacent character can delay the trap by interfering with the symbol.	
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 30: Standard action. An adjacent character can disable the trap by destroying the symbol.	

Tactics

The book swarms fly toward the nearest PCs and harass those characters throughout the library. If another character significant damage, they might change targets; otherwise, they are single-minded in their pursuit. The book swarms can trigger the traps.

Features of the Area

Balcony: The second floor balcony is 10 feet above the first floor.

Bookcases: These tall shelves (Athletics DC 10 to climb) act as blocking terrain for determining cover. A bookcase can be tipped over with a DC 20 Athletics check, leading to a Strength vs. Reflex attack against anything in the four squares where the bookcase falls. On a hit, the target is immobilized (save ends) and knocked prone. The area becomes difficult terrain.

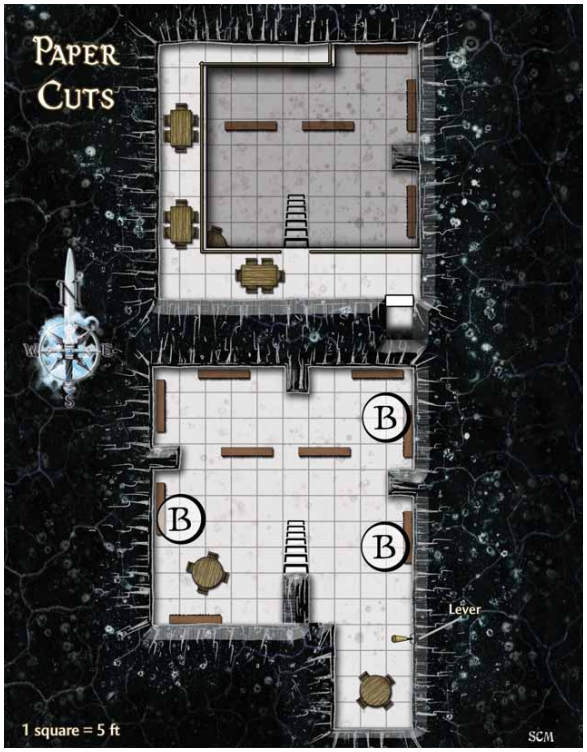
Ceiling: The ceiling is 10 feet above the balcony.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Fallen Books: The squares of destroyed book storm, including the square holding the symbol of insanity, are difficult terrain.

Stairs: The stairs are difficult terrain.

Tables and Chairs: A table can be tipped over to provide a low obstacle. A character can step up onto a table or chair by spending 1 extra square of movement.



5. Hill of Agony

Encounter Level 25 (40,000 XP)

Setup

1 advanced rancid tide (R)
3 death forest traps
1 vileshadow mist trap

A great draconic zombie—the rancid tide (**R**)—appears as if from nowhere, as soon as the lever is used incorrectly. Don't place it until it appears. Similarly, the poison gas rises from the earth like a morning mist. Although it's not a combatant or trap per se, roll initiative for the gas as well, so you know at what point it increases its depth (see Features of the Area). The difficulty of the terrain and monsters here grants 1,800 extra XP for this encounter.

When a PC pulls the lever incorrectly, read:

The hole in which you stand suddenly seems to waver before your eyes, and a heavy feeling of apathy and nausea washes over you. The hole fills with dark mist.

The mist also dims light. See its statistics.

Vileshadow Mist	**Level 24 Obstacle**
Trap	XP 6,050

The area begins to fill with shadowy mist, which dims the light as it induces nausea and growing despair.

The mist starts in a 2-square cube, and it expands 3 squares in every direction each turn until it fills the designated area.

Perception
No check is required to notice the mist.

Arcana
✦ DC 29: The character recognizes the nature of the mist.

Trigger
When a creature starts its turn in or enters a square that contains the trap's effect, the trap attacks.

Attack (Necrotic, Poison, Zone)
Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: Triggering creature
Attack: +28 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 8 necrotic and poison damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not slowed.
Effect: The gas lightly obscures its area. It makes bright light dim, and it makes dim light dark.

Countermeasures
✦ Endurance DC 26: A character can hold his or her breath well enough to avoid the effect of the gas for 1 round.
✦ *Dispel magic* against Will 37 forces the trap to start over form its original starting point.

If the PCs can see the hilltop, read:

The air before the door shimmers briefly. A draconic horror of rotting flesh and viscous, oozing fluids materializes there.

Advanced Rancid Tide	**Level 25 Elite Artillery**
Gargantuan natural animate (dragon, undead)	XP 14,000

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 366; **Bloodied** 183; see also *rancid flood*
AC 39; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 37
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 25 critical hits; radiant (a rancid tide that takes radiant damage is dazed [save ends])
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will)
Reach 4; +31 vs. AC; 2d6 + 10 damage.

Black Bile Spittle (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 15; +30 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 10 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the rancid tide's next turn.

Unholy Tears (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 12; +31 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 necrotic damage, and the target takes a –4 penalty to AC and Reflex defense (save ends).

Torrent of Terror (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
The rancid tide makes a *black bile spittle* and an *unholy tears* attack, each against a different target.

Rancid Flood (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; +30 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

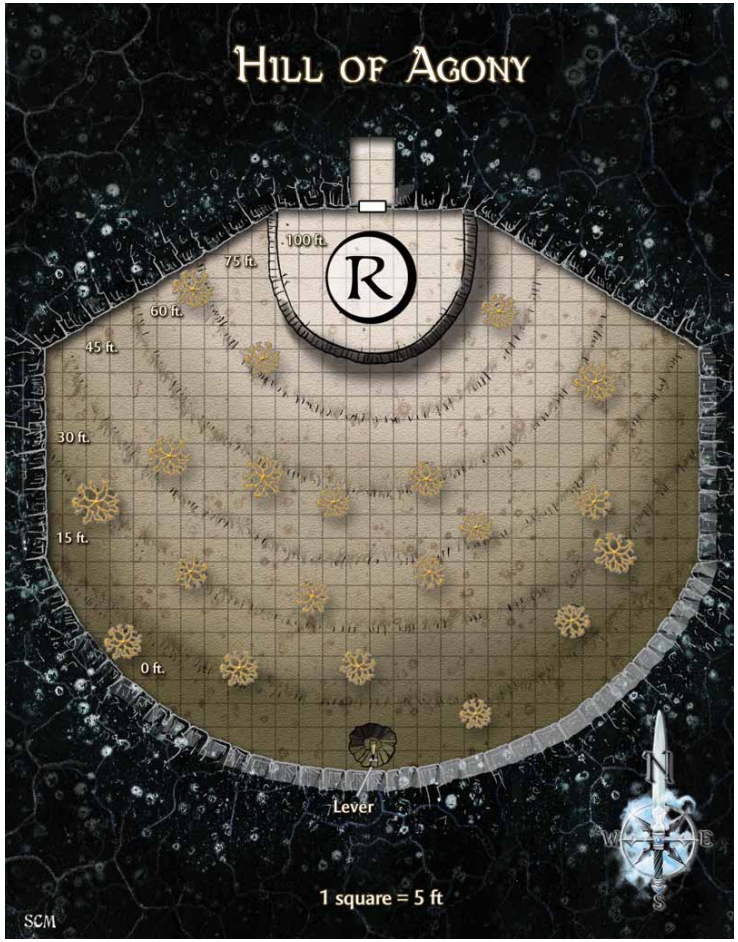
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 31 (+22)	**Dex** 14 (+14)	**Wis** 16 (+15)
Con 27 (+20)	**Int** 1 (+7)	**Cha** 8 (+11)

Use this to improvise if the characters don't see the draconic zombie until later.

When the PCs can see the trees, read:

The brass trees thrash their branches about.



3 Death Forests	**Level 24 Obstacle**
Trap	XP 6,050 each

Tree sculptures in the area whip out with their longest branches to entangle those who pass.

The trap consist of six to eight trees spaced 3 to 4 squares apart, so that their reach is continuous or overlaps with occasional gaps.

Perception

✦ DC 27: The character notices a few runes faintly etched in the brass.

Arcana

✦ DC 35: The character recognizes that the runes could provide animation, but they aren't sufficient to make the trees mobile.

Trigger

When a creature moves or starts its turn within 2 squares of a tree, that tree attacks.

Attack

Opportunity Action **Melee** reach 2
Target: Triggering creature
Attack: +28 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Countermeasures

✦ A character can attack a tree (AC 36; Defenses 36; hp 30). When reduced to 0 hit points, the tree collapses, creating difficult terrain in its square and all adjacent squares.
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 25: Standard action. An adjacent character can delay a tree by interfering with the runes.
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 28: Standard action. An adjacent character can disable the trap by destroying the runes.

Tactics

The rancid tide zombie never leaves its perch atop the hill. Shooting downhill, it focuses its attacks on mobile PCs to slay them before they can reach the top or avoid the mist. It makes a *torrent of terror* attack each round, even if doing so provokes opportunity attacks.

Features of the Area

Brass Trees: The sculpted trees act as blocking terrain for determining cover.

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 20 feet above the platform near the door.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Hole: This is 10 feet deep (Athletics DC 15 to climb).

Ledge: This rough shelf, between the platform and the start of the slope, is 25 feet high (Athletics DC 20 check to climb).

Steep Slope: From the base to the platform at the top, the hillside is difficult terrain.

6. Going in Circles

Encounter Level 25 (38,750 XP)

Setup

1 squamous spewer (S)
1 Tiamat doors trap

Once the encounter begins, provide the read-aloud text and place the squamous spewer (**S**) as shown, and have the PCs roll initiative. Do not roll initiative for the trap, as it triggers only under specific circumstances.

When a PC triggers the encounter read:

The walls ripple, as though viewed through a heat mirage. Ten doors open in the wall, each exiting into a hallway. They suddenly slam, as the images of Tiamat uncoil their necks. Those necks instead lead to the doors, where chromatic dragon heads stare back at you.

The bits of flesh fly together with a roar. From them forms a single, enormous heap of flesh, bone, horns, scales, eyes, and fangs. The hideous thing growls, squeals, roars, and mutters.

To determine which door is the real one, roll 1d10 when the PCs trigger the encounter, rerolling a result of 1.

Tiamat Doors **Level 26 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 18,000

Each door is shaped to resemble a chromatic dragon head. This trap consists of ten doors, one of which is the real exit (randomly determined). Each of the doors generates blast of energy comparable to a dragon's breath weapon.

Perception
No check is required to spot the doors, or the fact that each boasts an image of one of Tiamat's heads.

Arcana
✦ DC 32: The character recognizes the trap for what it is.

Trigger
When a creature starts its turn within 3 squares of a door, opens a door, or attacks a door, all the doors attack.

Attack (Acid, Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison)
Opportunity Action **Close** blast 4 (marked on map)
Target: All creatures in the area
Attack: +28 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage
Special: The damage type depends on the door.
Doors 1 and 8: Fire
Doors 2 and 6: Lightning
Doors 3 and 7: Cold
Doors 4 and 10: Poison
Doors 5 and 9: Acid

Countermeasures
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 27: Standard action. An adjacent character can prevent a door from triggering when it is opened. The other doors still trigger when the disabled door is opened.
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 30: Standard action. An adjacent character can prevent a door from triggering the others when opened. The disabled door itself is still triggered when opened.
✦ A character can attack a door (AC 38; Defenses 38; hp 70). When reduced to 0 hit points, the door turns to dust, leaving behind a blank wall (or the exit) and ceasing its attacks.
✦ Disabling half the doors in any way disables the entire trap.

Tactics

The squamous spewer fights boldly until bloodied. It opens with *storm of agony*, then spends an action point to use its *breath weapon*. With *frightful cacophony* and *far stare*, it pushes the PCs into the area of the doors. Until its powers recharge, it gnashes away with *triple bite*, saving its second action point for another *storm of agony* and *breath weapon* pairing, perhaps right after *bloodied breath* goes off. If it needs to pursue PCs into a door's area of attack, the squamous spewer activates its *variable resist* to avoid damage from that door. It avoids the area of the poison doors after it is bloodied.

Squamous Spewer	**Level 22 Solo Soldier**
Huge aberrant magical beast (dragon)	XP 20,750
Initiative +19	**Senses** Perception +14; all-around vision, darkvision
Frightful Cacophony (Fear) aura 5; any enemy within the aura that is taking ongoing psychic damage is pushed 3 squares.	
HP 1,055; **Bloodied** 527; see also *bloodied breath*	
AC 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 33	
Resist 15 variable (2/encounter; *MM* 282)	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 8, burrow 4	
Action Points 2	
Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
Reach 3; +29 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Spew Fangs (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage.	
Triple Attack (standard; at-will)	
The spewer makes three bite attacks.	
Far Stare (immediate reaction, when an enemy attacks the spewer; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
The spewer locks eyes with the triggering enemy; ranged 5; +27 vs. Will; 3d10 + 9 psychic damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**	
Close blast 5; +27 vs. Reflex; 3d12 + 6 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage, and no ongoing damage.	
Storm of Agony (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**	
Close burst 10; +27 vs. Will; 3d10 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is stunned and takes ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends both).	
Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**	
The spewer's *breath weapon* recharges, and the spewer uses it immediately.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Draconic, Far Speech
Skills Intimidate +18	
Str 29 (+20)	**Dex** 23 (+17) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 27 (+19)	**Int** 17 (+14) **Cha** 14 (+13)

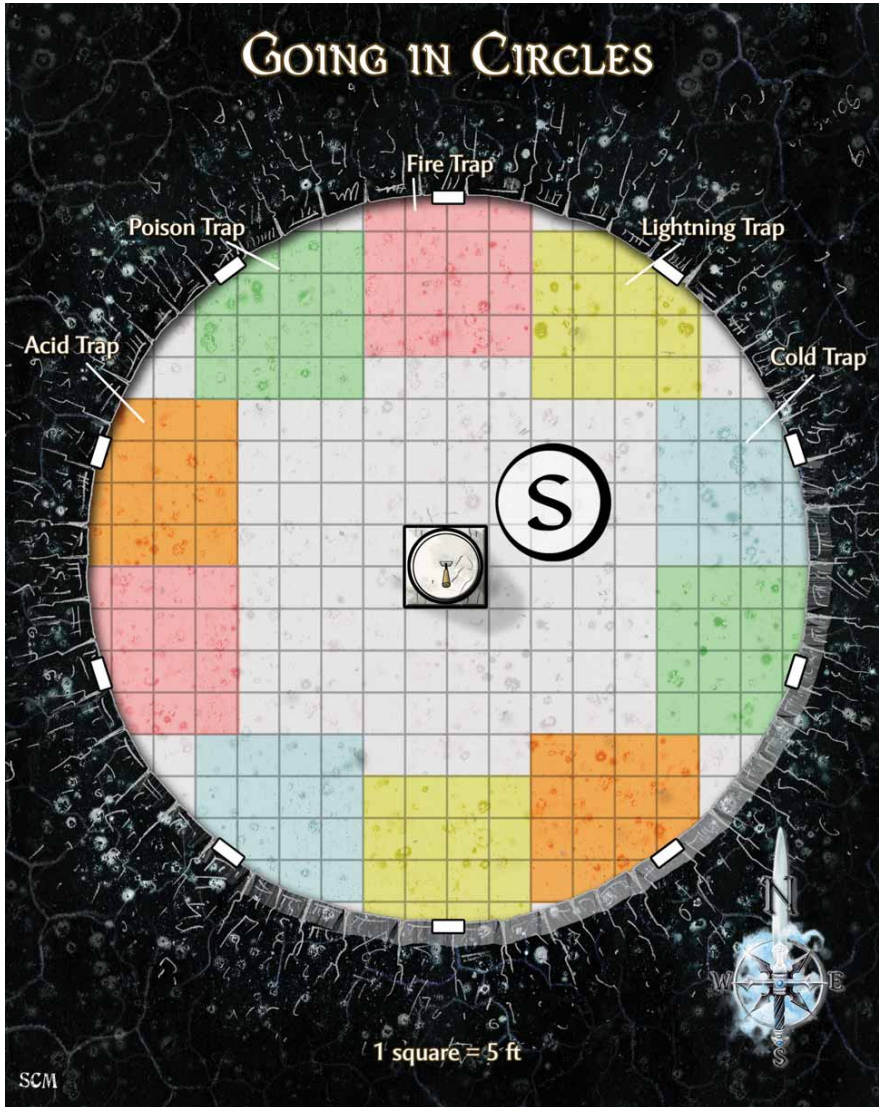
Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 20 feet high.

Doors: None of the doors are locked, but the false ones open onto a blank wall.

Conclusion

The PCs can escape this chamber any time they find the proper door, whether or not they've destroyed the squamous spewer.



7. Dread Gates

Encounter Level 25 (36,000 XP)

Setup

1 slashing portcullis
1 dread pit

Once the PCs trigger this encounter, provide the read-aloud text and roll initiative for the slashing portcullis. The traps come into existence when the PCs trigger the encounter, and then the floor over the pit phases out of existence and is replaced with an illusion. The pit makes it difficult to reach the door, since the portcullis does not allow for a running start.

When the PCs trigger the encounter, read:

With a humming vibration, two glowing lattices form from the ceiling downward, like a portcullis. With blinding speed, the hallway between the two larger chambers has been fully cut off.

When the trap reaches its first initiative, read:

With a speed greater even than when they first fell, the portcullises pivot upward, toward the ceiling, slashing at all in their path, before dropping once more to the earth. The entire attack takes less than a second.

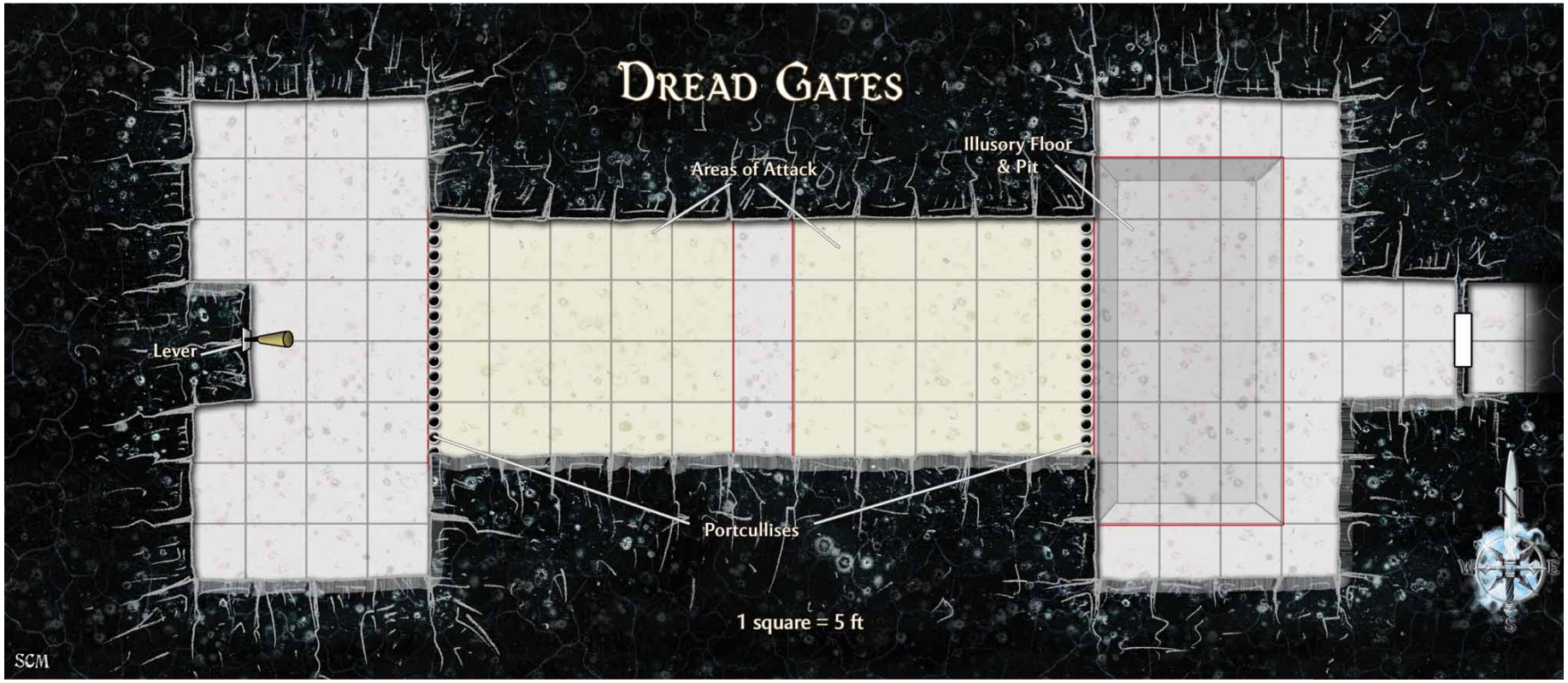
When a PC falls into the pit trap, read:

The floor beneath you ceases to exist, and you find yourself plummeting into utter darkness.

Features of the Area

The following features can affect play in this area.

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 15 feet high.
Door: This door is unlocked.



Slashing Portcullis **Level 26 Elite Obstacle**
Trap XP 18,000

Two heavy gates not only block progress but also regularly pivot up toward the ceiling, slashing at those nearby with their bladed bars.

The trap is usually a hall with two gates.

Perception

✦ DC 27: The character notices sparkling lines and runes in the ceiling where the gates form.

Arcana

✦ DC 32: The character discerns what the lines and runes mean.

Trigger

Once the lever has been pulled, anyone entering (or already standing in) the attack area of the easternmost gate causes the portcullises to fall as an immediate reaction. They then roll initiative to determine when they attack. (Roll once for both gates, since this is a single trap with two components.)

Initiative +23

Attack (Force)

Standard Action **Close** blast 5
Target: Creatures in area
Attack: +31 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 6 force damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends), and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.

Countermeasure

✦ A character can ready a move action to move under the portcullis as it slashes upward. This requires a successful DC 27 Acrobatics check. Failure means the character did not pass underneath before the bars swung down, and that character is attacked. Failure by 5 or more means the character is hit automatically by the attack (no roll required).
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 27: Standard action. An adjacent character can slow a gate's fall, granting a +4 on Acrobatics checks to move under the gate.
✦ Athletics DC 25: A character can climb the wall to move adjacent to the line in the ceiling.
✦ Arcana or Thievery DC 32: 1 minute. A character adjacent to the line in the ceiling can disable a gate.
✦ Athletics DC 32: Move action. A character can push the portcullis up, move 1 square into its space, and hold it until it attacks. The character takes 3d10 + 6 force damage when initiating this action (success or failure), and is subject to the trap's attack.

Dread Pit **Level 26 Elite Lurker**
Trap XP 18,000

A deep pit, channeling black necrotic energy, is covered by a substantive illusion of a normal floor.

The trap can cover up to 20 contiguous squares. It is 30 feet deep.

Perception

✦ DC 32: The character notices the illusory floor.

Trigger

The trap attacks when a character enters one of the squares containing the pit.

Attack (Necrotic)

Immediate Reaction **Melee**
Target: The creature that triggered the trap.
Attack: +30 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target falls into pit, takes 3d10 damage, is knocked prone from the fall, and loses a healing surge.
Miss: Target returns to the last square it occupied and its move action ends immediately.
Effect: The pit is still hidden, but other characters have now seen that one specific square is unsafe. Inside the pit, any bright light creates only 1 square of dim light. Dim light doesn't function, nor does darkvision. A creature that starts its turn in the pit takes 15 necrotic damage.

Countermeasures

✦ Athletics DC 30: A character can jump over the pit.
✦ Athletics DC 30: A character can climb out of the pit.

8. Dire Reflections

Encounter Level 25 (36,150 XP)

Setup

3 great flameskulls (F)
1 mirrors of dark visions trap

No threats are visible until the PCs trigger this encounter. As soon as the tactical encounter begins, place the great flameskulls (**F**) on the map.

When a PC triggers the encounter, read:

The images in the mirror take on a menacing tone. You see your allies' reflections turn to look at you with evil grins and murder in their eyes, their weapons upraised to strike. Hideous forms start to creep into the scenes.

When a flameskull first flies into view, read:

A flying skull appears, cackling madly and surrounded in yellow-green flames.

3 Great Flameskulls **Level 24 Artillery**
Small natural animate (undead) XP 6,050 each

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +22; truesight 6
HP 174; **Bloodied** 87
Regeneration 10
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 37
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed fly 10 (hover)

⊕ **Fiery Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+26 vs. AC; 1d4 damage plus 2d6 fire damage.

Flame Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 10 fire damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the great flameskull's next turn.

Firestorm (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 4 within 20; +27 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 10 fire damage. *Miss:* Half damage. The firestorm blocks line of sight, deals 10 fire damage to any creature that starts its turn in the area, and disappears at the end of the great flameskull's next turn. The great flameskull can exclude allies from the effect.

Mage Hand (minor; at-will) ✦ **Conjuration**
As the wizard power *mage hand* (*Player's Handbook* 158).

Illumination
The great flameskull sheds bright light out to 5 squares, but it can reduce its brightness to dim light out to 2 squares as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, one other
Skills Stealth +24

Str 10 (+12)	**Dex** 25 (+19)	**Wis** 21 (+17)
Con 24 (+19)	**Int** 30 (+22)	**Cha** 28 (+21)

Mirrors of Dark Visions **Level 26 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 18,000

Glittering mirrors reflect the horrors lurking deep in every hero's psyche.

The mirrors are positioned to reflect most parts of the room, since their attack relies on line of sight to targets. Freestanding mirrors act like walls for determining line of sight, line of effect, and cover.

Perception
No roll is required to detect the mirrors.

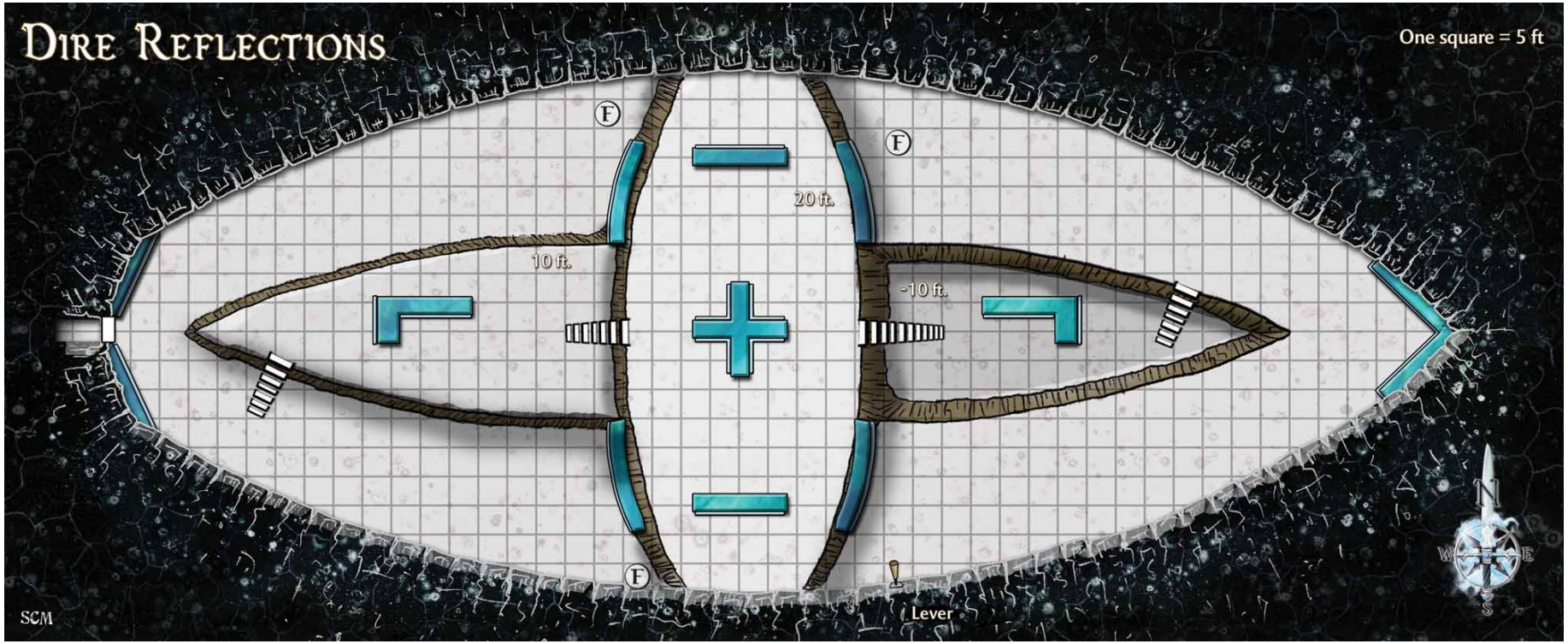
Arcana
✦ DC 28: The character recognizes the mirror as a trap, but not what kind of trap.
✦ DC 32: The character recognizes the mirrors for what they are.

Trigger
When characters take a predetermined action, the mirrors roll initiative twice. They attack one randomly determined PC on each of their initiative counts.

Initiative +22

Attack (Fear, Psychic)
Standard Action **Ranged** sight
Special: This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
Target: One creature
Attack: +30 vs. Will
Hit: 2d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the target uses its next turn's actions to move away from the mirror. It uses the most direct route, provoking opportunity attacks and employing whatever movement modes are necessary to escape.
Miss: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Countermeasure
✦ A character can attack a mirror (AC 38, Defenses 38; hp 30; regeneration 10).



Tactics

The mirrors trigger on their initiative each round. The flameskulls focus their attacks on characters who avoid the mirrors' blast zones, or who seem capable of defending against the trap's effect. The flameskulls cooperate, preferring to focus their attacks on a specific character rather each choosing a separate target. They prioritize wizards and archers over melee combatants.

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 15 feet above the highest ledge.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Ledges: Climbing from one level to another without the stairs requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check.

Stairs: The stairs are difficult terrain.

9. Bottled Sandstorm

Encounter Level 25 (35,000 XP)

Setup

As soon as the PCs trigger this encounter, torrents of sand begin to spray from the walls and ceiling at multiple points. Even as large as the cavern is, it becomes apparent that it can fill in a short amount of time, crushing or suffocating anyone within. Use the read-aloud text and then describe the skill challenge.

When the encounter begins, read:

You hear the grind of the massive chamber rotating, but another noise quickly drowns out the familiar. From multiple holes on the ceiling and in the walls come torrents of sand. They swiftly begin whipping about the chamber like a supernaturally fierce sandstorm, then pile up on the hard earth floor. You can see that it already covers the entire cavern to a depth of several inches.

Other Factors

Epic-tier characters have more than skills at their disposal, and a great many powers and spells can improve their odds of success. A few obvious possibilities are presented here, but players are creative. Just as with skill uses, if they come up with inventive ways to use powers, let them do so.

✦ Powers that provide a PC the ability to fly, climb, or otherwise rise above the sands grant a +4 bonus to Dungeoneering and Perception checks.

✦ Powers that allow a character to teleport up to 10 squares, or to phase through solid objects, grant a +4 bonus to Athletics and Acrobatics checks. In addition, that particular character takes no damage for the next single failure.

✦ Powers that create barriers, such as *wall of ice*, offer the PCs the ability to move without the sand pressing against them. These grant the PCs one free success.

Buried Alive

As a last ditch escape, give anyone on the ground a DC 30 Dungeoneering or Perception check. Success allows that PC to find a hollow that isn't entirely filling with sand. Finally, just before he or she is fully buried, a PC who has a teleportation power available might be able to use it to teleport above the level of the sand (4 squares). In these cases, the characters can wait out the danger. The sand slowly drains out of the cavern over the course of 15 minutes. Those who are buried in the sand have a much harder time of it.

Location: The cavern is roughly 60 squares across. Assume that each success the party earned moved them 5 squares nearer the door. This is the base starting point for characters who are buried alive.

Suffocation: Characters buried alive must hold their breath or begin suffocating. See Starvation, Thirst, and Suffocation, *DMG* 159.

Escape: A buried PC can move 2 squares in a round—digging through the sand—with a successful DC 33 Athletics check. On a failure, the PC does not move. Failure by 5 or more reduces the time that the PC can hold his or her breath by 1 round.

If the PC finally reaches the far wall, a successful DC 33 Perception check means that character has reached the door. On a failure, the PC is instead 1d4 squares away, and on a failure by 5 or more the PC is 1d4 + 4 squares away. Fortunately, the feel of the curve of the wall tells the PC which way to move to reach the door.

Alternatively, a buried PC can climb up and out of the sand, rather than moving forward. This is a harder check—Athletics DC 38—but requires fewer squares of movement (4 squares).

Bottled Sandstorm Skill Challenge	**Level 25** XP 35,000
You have mere minutes—if even that long—before suffocation and entombment become very real possibilities.	
The PCs must reach the door and escape before being completely buried in sand, struggling through a blinding sandstorm and ever growing layers of grit. Each round of the skill challenge represents a round of real time.	
Complexity	
5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).	
Primary Skills	
Acrobatics, Athletics, Dungeoneering,	
Other Skills	
Endurance, Perception.	
Victory	
The PCs reach the door and can move through it.	
Defeat	
Each failure on this challenge deals 3d10 damage to each PC. Defeat on the entire challenge leaves one or more PCs buried in sand—see Buried Alive.	
Acrobatics (DC 27)	
(1 success or failure, maximum 2 successes) The PC is able to maneuver through the shifting sand quickly and then help others forward.	
Athletics (DC 26)	
(1 success or failure, maximum 6 successes) The PC is able to force through the thickening sand, blazing a trail that the others can follow.	
Dungeoneering (DC 26)	
(1 success or failure, maximum 5 successes). Using knowledge of the cavern's layout, the PC can estimate where the ground is higher, or where the torrents of sand likely haven't risen as high. Using this information, passage is easier.	
Endurance (DC 23)	
(0 successes or failures) After making any other skill check (regardless of success or failure), a character must succeed on this check or take 3d10 damage.	
Perception (DC 3)	
1 (0 successes or failures) The PC spots an area where the way is clearer, granting +2 on one other skill check this round.	

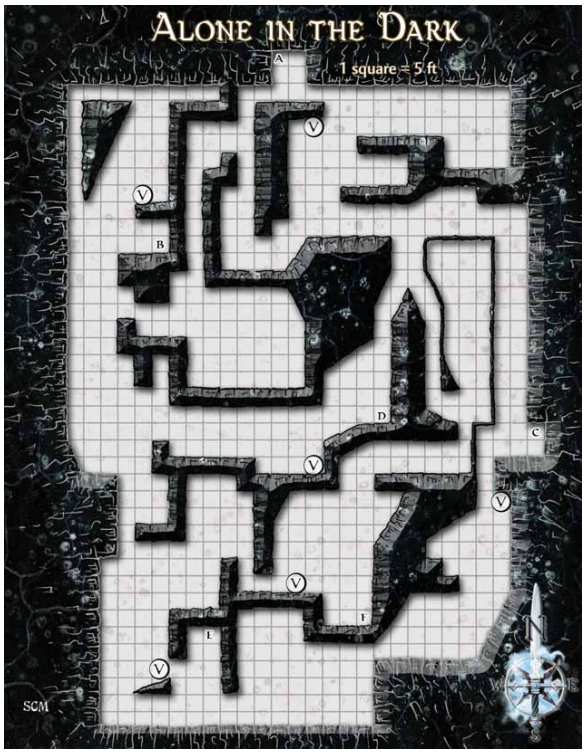
10. Alone in the Dark

Encounter Level 25 (36,300)

Setup

6 darkland voidsoul specters (V)

The instant the PCs pull the lever, they find themselves in this shadowy maze, their lights reduced to half the normal radius. Place one PC at each of the points labeled "a" through "f," in order. Remind the PCs that none of them know where the others are, or even that the others are present. The voidsoul specters (**V**) appear immediately and begin stalking the PCs.



When the encounter triggers, read:

A tingling sensation washes over you, and the lights go out. It suddenly becomes very cold.

If the PCs have light, read:

Your light is dimmer than it should be. Around you are walls of black stone. Running along the walls are runes etched into the stone. The cold here is biting, like deep winter.

When a specter appears, read:

A phantasmal figure appears. Its head is a blackened skull, its body writhing black mists. It glares at you with empty sockets, and you feel the air around you grow hideously cold.

6 Darkland Voidsoul Specters (V) Level 24 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 6,050 each
Initiative +25 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Spectral Cold (Cold) aura 1; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 cold damage and takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the start of its next turn.
HP 119; **Bloodied** 59
AC 36; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 30 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing
⊕ **Spectral Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+28 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage.
⇢ **Life Siphon** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +27 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the darkland voidsoul specter regains 5 hit points for every creature damaged by the attack.
Invisibility (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The darkland voidsoul specter becomes invisible until it attacks or until it is hit by an attack. It remains invisible while using *life siphon*.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +24
Str 14 (+14) **Dex** 28 (+21) **Wis** 6 (+10)
Con 20 (+17) **Int** 10 (+12) **Cha** 25 (+19)

Tactics

Each specter turns invisible and moves adjacent to the nearest character among the PCs, whom the specters can track flawlessly in the maze. A specter is content to remain invisible and let its aura work on a lone character. It uses Stealth to remain undetected, hoping the PC mistakes the damage for the general cold of the area. (A successful DC 30 Religion check allows the PC to discern the origin of the cold.)

When two or more characters finally come together, the specters following them take turns attacking with *spectral touch*. This can create the illusion of one powerful undead entity. When bloodied, each specter uses *life siphon* while invisible. The specters focus their attacks on PCs manipulating the runes.

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling in both areas is 15 feet high.

Necrotic Affinity: Any attack that has the necrotic keyword gains a +1 bonus to the attack roll (included in the specter statistics), and attacks that have the radiant keyword deal half damage. Ongoing radiant damage is not affected.

Reanimation: Living humanoids killed here reanimate as darkland voidsoul specters one day after death (*MM* 119). The Gentle Repose ritual or destruction of the corpse prevents a creature from reanimating.

Runes: The runes on the walls are magical, and they tie the PCs here (Arcana DC 22 to discern). Those who succeed realize that they can escape by altering the runes on six wall surfaces, each at least 10 squares away from the others (Arcana or Thievery DC 28; failure costs a healing surge). If the PCs fail to alter the runes three times in a row, all successes are lost and the party must start over. If this task is complete, all PCs vanish from the maze and reappear in the worldly room.

11. Fire and Fog

Encounter Level 26 (46,500 XP)

Setup

1 primal storm, brown dragon (P)
2 desert wraths (W)
3 chaos hazes

The creatures here include a living breath weapon and two creations that embody the fierce heat and scouring sands of a living desert. They do not appear until the encounter is triggered. Place the desert wraths (**W**) and the primal storm (**P**) as you describe the scene.

When the monsters appear, read:

Swirling sand appears in the mist, taking on a vaguely draconic shape on a ledge near the door. Behind the dragon of sand, two substantially more massive figures coalesce. Appearing as giant columns of sand, these larger ones flare with burning light like that of the desert sun.

Tactics

The desert wraths hold back in the chaos haze, delaying for when a PC comes near. They attack before the round ends, moving to the PCs if no melee attackers close on them. A desert wrath uses *grinding wrath* every round, and unleashes *burning flaywind* when more than one PC is within the area or before it becomes bloodied. These creatures are heedless of opportunity attacks until bloodied, so they move where they will, forcing the PCs into disadvantageous positions. They try to draw the PCs into the chaos haze. One uses an action point early in the combat to use *grinding wrath* twice and *burning flaywind* on the same turn, while another uses the same tactic after it's bloodied.

The primal storm stays atop the ledge and launches *sand stream* until it can hit multiple PCs with *sand burst*. Then it uses the area attack. It saves *sand devil* for when it is assailed in melee.

Features of the Area

The following features can affect play in this area.

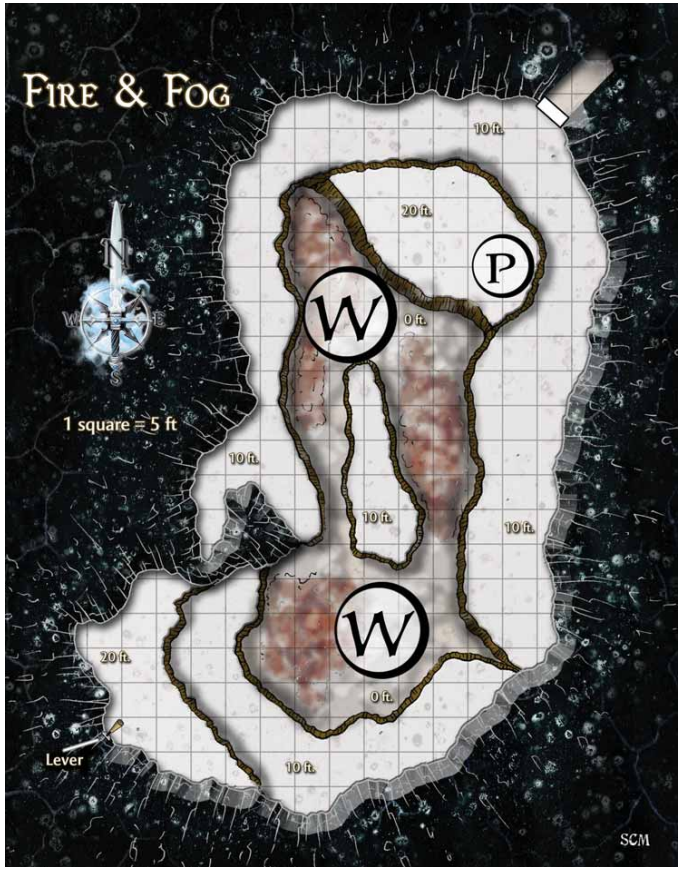
Ceiling: The ceiling here is 20 feet high.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Fog: The lower area (0 feet) is filled with fog to a height of 10 feet. The area within is lightly obscured.

Ledges: Climbing from one level to another without using the stairs requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Slope: The rises within the cavern are moderately steep. Squares that contain a dotted line indicating height are difficult terrain.



3 Chaos Hazes **Level 23 Blaster**
Hazard XP 5,100

A dark haze hangs about a foot off the ground. It seems to carry a slight charge. Its touch burns slightly, but with no heat.

The hazard occupies 10 contiguous squares.

Perception
✦ No roll is normally required to notice the haze, unless similar mist obscures it. Then a DC 33 Perception check is required.

Arcana
✦ DC 30: The character recognizes the haze for what it is.

Trigger
If creature within the haze uses a power than deals typed damage, the mist attacks that character.

Attack
Opportunity Action **Close** burst 1, centered on the triggering creature.
Target: All creatures in the area
Attack: +28 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d12 + 9 damage of the same type as the triggering effect.
Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures
✦ A triggering character can choose to be hit and siphon off the excess energy with a successful DC 29 Arcana or Endurance check. Doing so renders the hazard inert until the end of the triggering character's next turn.
✦ A triggering character can choose to be hit and siphon off the excess energy with a successful DC 26 Arcana or Endurance check. Doing so renders the hazard inert until the end of the triggering character's next turn. Whether the check succeeds or not, the character is dazed (save ends).

2 Desert Wraths (W) **Level 24 Elite Brute**
Huge natural animate (construct) XP 12,100

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +19; tremorsense 5
HP 560; **Bloodied** 280; see also *burning flaywind*
AC 37; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 37
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 fire, 15 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 10
Action Points 1

Slam (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Radiant**
Reach 3; +28 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage plus 1d10 fire and radiant damage.

Grinding Wrath (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Radiant**
The desert wrath makes two slam attacks.

Burning Flaywind (free, when the desert wrath hits a target with its slam attack; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Fire, Radiant**
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +24 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 10 damage and ongoing 10 fire and radiant damage, and the target slides 3 squares and is immobilized (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 30 (+22) **Dex** 24 (+19) **Wis** 24 (+19)
Con 30 (+22) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 8 (+11)

Primal Storm, brown dragon **Level 25 Artillery**
Large natural animate (construct) XP 7,000

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +18; tremorsense 5
HP 181; **Bloodied** 90
AC 37; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 36
Immune disease, poison
Speed 10

Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage.

Sand Stream (standard; at-will)
Ranged 15; +32 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the target slides 2 squares and is slowed (save ends).

Sand Burst (standard; recharges when first bloodied)
Area burst 3 within 10; + 29 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 7 damage. Swirling sand remains in the area, creating a heavily obscured area until the end of the primal storm's next turn. Those who start their turn in or enter the area during this time take 10 damage.

Sand Devil (move; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The primal storm transforms into sand and shifts 4 squares. It can shift through occupied spaces, but it must end its move in an unoccupied space. If it moves through a creature's space, that creature is subject to an attack: +29 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the primal storm's next turn. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is not blinded.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 18 (+16) **Dex** 28 (+21) **Wis** 22 (+18)
Con 25 (+19) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 7 (+10)

12. Crystal Killer

Encounter Level 27 (55,000 XP)

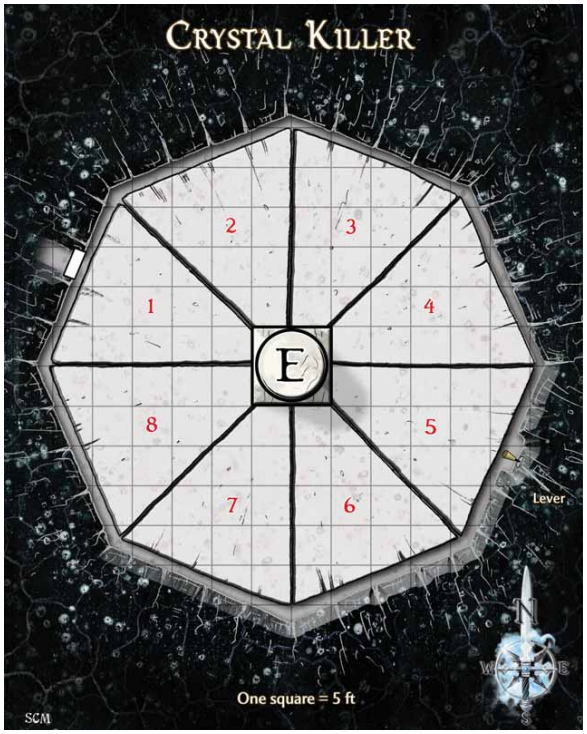
Setup

1 Eye of Zaggoth

Place the PCs wherever they were standing when the lever was pulled, and place the gem and pedestal (**G**) as you read the text below. Roll initiative once for the trap, once for each attack.

When the encounter begins, read:

A gem, perfectly clear and carved to resemble a beholder with eyestalks outstretched, rises from the pedestal in the center of the room. The eyes begin to flash with an eerie light.



Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 15 feet high.

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Eye of Zaggoth **Level 27 Solo Blaster**
Trap XP 55,000

This fist-sized crystal is cut to resemble a beholder.

The Eye of Zaggoth is an octagonal or circular room with one door and a pedestal in the center. It has eight segments, as the tactical map shows.

Perception

✦ DC 30: The character notices an odd seam around the room's perimeter at the base of the wall. The floor seems circular, rather than conforming to the octagonal room.

Arcana

✦ DC 33: The character recognizes the gem for what it is.

Dungeoneering

Requires success on the Perception check.

✦ DC 30: The character notices the floor isn't attached to the walls. It's possible this room can rotate or otherwise move away from the walls.

Trigger

The trap activates and rolls initiative when a specific condition is met. Attack 1 occurs on the trap's initial initiative count, attack 2 occurs on a count 5 points lower, and attack 3 occurs on a count 10 lower.

Initiative +21

Attack 1

Standard Action **Close** burst 5 centered on pedestal

Target: Creatures in blast
Attack: +32 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Attack 2

Standard Action **Close** blast 5 originating adjacent to the pedestal

Special: Each round, roll 1d8 to determine which segment of the room the blast's origin square is in. The blast is oriented in that square to include as many PCs as possible.
Target: Creatures in blast
Attack: +32 vs. (see defense below)
Special: Roll 1d8 for the effect.
1—(Reflex; Radiant): 2d10 + 9 radiant damage and ongoing 10 radiant damage (save ends).
2—(Reflex; Necrotic): 2d12 + 9 necrotic damage, and ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).
3—(Will; Psychic): 3d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target falls unconscious (save ends).
4—(Will; Charm): 4d6 + 8 psychic damage, and the target makes a basic attack against the nearest ally, moving or charging if necessary.
5—(Fortitude, Cold): 3d10 + 9 cold damage, and the target is restrained (save ends)
6—(Reflex): The target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target is petrified (save ends).
7—(Fortitude; Necrotic): 3d10 + 9 necrotic damage, and if the target is bloodied it is dazed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is dazed and weakened (save ends).
8—(Will): 3d10 + 9 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends). *Aftereffect:* Ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Attack 3

Immediate Reaction or **Standard Action** **Close** burst 5, centered on the pedestal
Trigger: A creature moves or starts its turn adjacent to the door.
Special: This attack can occur twice per round—once as an immediate interrupt and once as a standard action on this attack's turn. The floor rotates 1d8 - 1 sections each time this attack goes off. Move the door to its new section, rather than moving the room's occupants.
Target: Creatures in the room
Attack: +32 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Countermeasure

✦ Perception DC 33: Minor action. The character discerns the area that the next blast targets.
✦ Thievery DC 32: Standard action. The character works to detach the eye from the pedestal. Four successful checks are required to remove the eye and disable the trap.
✦ A character can attack the eye (AC 43, Defenses 40; hp 400). When reduced to 0 hit points, the eye explodes in a close burst 5, attacking every creature in the area with Attack 2 (version 6, petrification). However, the petrified condition on this version of that attack allows no save. Destroying the eye disables the trap.

17. Stairway to Hell

Encounter Level 27 (56,000 XP)

Setup

1 breathing door trap (B)
1 dragon blades trap (D)
1 sweeping halberd trap (H)
1 claws of sand trap (C)
1 jaws of death trap (J)

This encounter includes five traps. Roll initiative when the first trap has activated, adding additional traps as they activate.

When the breathing door first attacks, read:

A howling gust of burning sand rushes downward, flaying everything in its path.

When the dragon blades first attack, read:

The neck of the great dragon statue bends, aiming its fearsome head straight at you.

When the sweeping halberd first attacks, read:

The dragon-headed god rotates, bringing its great halberd down and around in a sweeping arc.

When the claws of sand first attack, read:

A great draconic claw, covered in sand and flickering fire, rises up and makes a sudden grab.

When the jaws of death first attack, read:

A stream of dark mist splits swiftly into multiple translucent serpents with gaping draconic jaws.

Tactics

The traps activate and attack as described. The jaws of death use their slide ability to yank PCs off stairs or statues, to send them tumbling down the steps, or to move a target into range of other traps.

Breathing Door (B) **Level 25 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 14,000

This doorway breathes a variation of the dragon's own breath weapon.

Trap: This trapped doorway is triggered if a creature comes near, and then it breathes at regular intervals and when a creature tries to sneak past its frame.

Perception
✦ DC 37: The character notices the runes carefully inscribed around the doorframe.

Trigger
When a creature approaches to within 12 squares of the door, it makes its first attack as an immediate reaction. It then enters the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered it, attacking each round. In addition, it can make one extra attack each round as an immediate reaction, triggering when a creature enters a square adjacent to the door.

Attack
Immediate Reaction or **Standard Action** **Close** blast 12
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: +30 vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d10 + 5 fire damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not blinded.

Countermeasures
✦ Creatures behind the rubble on the stairs have cover. A creature clinging to the opposite side of a statue has superior cover.
✦ The trap is focused on a group of runes infused with arcane and elemental energy on the keystone of the doorway's arch. A creature adjacent to the keystone can attempt to deactivate the trap with a DC 33 Thievery check or Arcana check.

Dragon Blades (D) **Level 25 Blaster**
Trap XP 7,000

The carving of the dragon that encircles the great pillar hurls blades of pure force.

Trap: When the PCs reach the lower stairs, the statue starts hurling force blades.

Perception
✦ DC 25: The character notices that the eyes and mouth of the dragon sculpture are hollow.
✦ DC 33: The character spots the hidden compartment that hides the trap's controls among the spines on the dragon's back.

Trigger
When the PCs have moved 3 squares lower on the stairs than the trap, it rolls initiative.

Initiative +3

Attack
Standard Action **Ranged** 20
Primary Target: One creature in range
Attack: +30 vs. AC
Hit: 4d12 + 6 damage.
Effect: The trap attacks two other creatures in range within 6 squares of the primary target.

Countermeasures
✦ Creatures behind the rubble on the stairs have cover. A creature clinging to the opposite side of a statue has superior cover.
✦ A creature adjacent to the control mechanism can disable the trap with a DC 35 Thievery check.
✦ A creature adjacent to the pillar can attempt to destroy it (AC 4, Fortitude 15, hp 300).

Sweeping Halberd (H) **Level 25 Elite Obstacle**
Trap XP 14,000

The great dragon-headed humanoid statue clutches a halberd. It seems capable of clearing a wide swath with a single swing.

Trap: When the PCs pass the statue, it swings its halberd and then continues to attack each round and when someone tries to pass by the statue.

Perception
✦ DC 31: The character notices that portions of the statue are hinged for movement.

✦ DC 35: The character spots the hidden control panel in the statue's abdomen.

Trigger

When the PCs have moved 1 square lower than the statue on the stairs, it attacks as an immediate reaction. It then enters the initiative order directly after the creature that triggered it, attacking each round. In addition, it can make one extra attack each round as an immediate reaction, triggered when someone attempts to move past the trigger square heading upward.

Attack

Immediate Reaction or **Standard Action** **Melee** reach 6
Target: One creature
Attack: +31 vs. AC
Hit: 5d10 + 9 damage, and the target slides 4 squares (always down the stairs).
Miss: Half damage, and no slide.

Countermeasures

✦ A creature adjacent to the statue can attempt to disable the trap (Thievery DC 30).
✦ The statue can be destroyed (AC/Reflex 10, Fortitude 37, hp 200).

Claws of Sand (C) **Level 25 Lurker**
Trap XP 7,000

Great claws of burning sand rise up from the floor to grasp at those around them.

Trap: When the PCs venture too close, claws of sand reach out to attack them.

Perception

✦ DC 28: The character notices something odd about the patterns of sand on the floor.

Trigger

When a character comes within 8 squares of the focus point marked "C" on the shrine, the trap rolls initiative.

Initiative +6

Attack

Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature in range
Attack: +28 vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d8 + 9 damage an ongoing 10 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).
Miss: Half damage, no ongoing damage, and the target is slowed (not immobilized) until the end of the trap's next turn.

Countermeasures

✦ A creature adjacent to the shrine can attempt to disable the trap (Thievery DC 30).
✦ A character can attack the focus point on the shrine (AC/Reflex 4, Fortitude 10, hp 135). Destroying the focus point deactivates the trap.

Jaws of Death (J) **Level 25 Elite Lurker**
Trap XP 14,000

Wispy, wraithlike serpents with draconic heads lash out, biting bodies and souls.

Trap: The trap's activation is contingent on the activation of other traps in the room. When one of those traps is triggered, this one is triggered as well.

Perception

✦ DC 28: The character notices runes carved into the skulls that make up the shrine.

Trigger

When any other trap in the room is triggered, this trap rolls initiative.

Initiative +6

Attack

Standard Action **Ranged** sight
Target: Two creatures in range
Attack: +29 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target slides 6 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

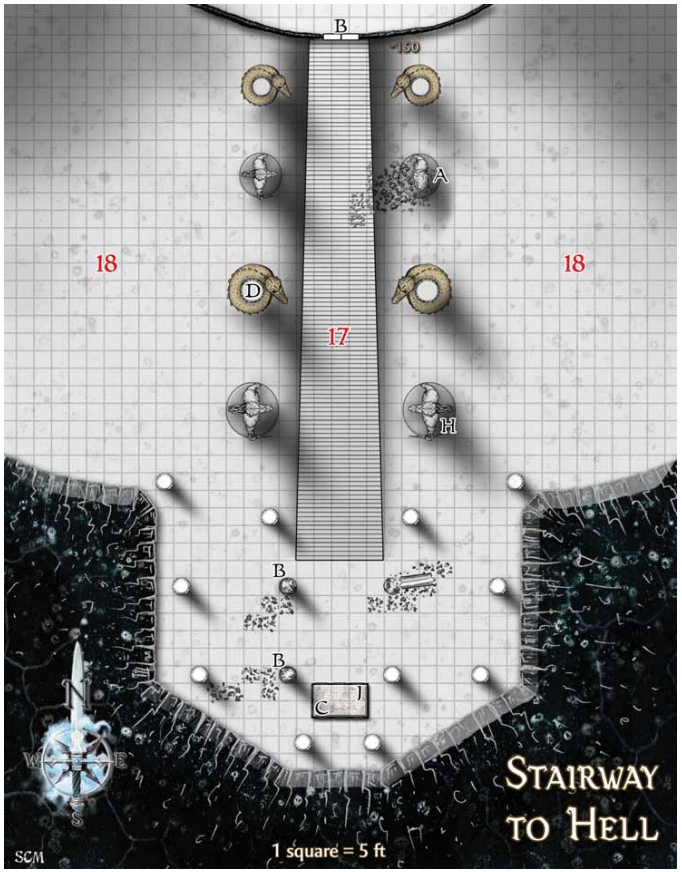
Countermeasures

✦ A character can attack the skulls in the shrine (AC/Reflex 4, Fortitude 10, hp 165). Destroying the skulls deactivates the trap.
✦ Any radiant damage dealt to the skulls delays the trap for 1 round (in addition to dealing damage).

Features of the Area

Door: This heavily reinforced door is locked if the tactical encounter is triggered (DC 35 Athletics check to break down; DC 28 Thievery to unlock).

Pillars: Each 40-foot-tall pillar fills a square and provides cover. Climbing a pillar requires a DC 33 Athletics check. The pillars marked "b" are broken off at a height of roughly 20 feet.



Rubble: These squares are difficult terrain.

Shrine: A character can step up onto the shrine at the cost of 1 extra square of movement.

Steep Stairs: The stairs are difficult terrain. A character subjected to forced movement effect that moves him down the stairs must succeed on a DC 33 Acrobatics check or tumble an additional 5 squares (or to the base), taking 1d6 damage and falling prone.

Statues: Climbing a statue or clinging to one after leaping from the steps requires a DC 29 Athletics check. The statue marked "a" is broken off about 5 feet higher than the neighboring stairs.

19. Beneath the Sands

Encounter Level 27 (58,000 XP)

Setup

1 earthen wyvern trap (E)
1 jaws of death trap (J)
Urum-Shar, ancient brown dragon (U)

Encounter Level 28 (65,000 XP), add:
1 dread wraith (W)

Provide the read-aloud text, then place Urum-Shar and a miniature or indicator for the earthen wyvern on the map. Do not place an indicator of the jaws of death trap until the PCs discover it. Do not place the dread wraith unless someone enters the pit.

When the earthen wyvern spits, read:

A stream of sparkling, viscous fluid erupts from the sculpted wyvern's mouth.

When the dragon appears, read:

Huge wings propel a draconic body into the air, its scales the color of ancient sand. This must be the dreaded Urum-Shar!

Perception
DC 37 *Several small dragon skulls jut from the edges of the large platform that overhangs the pit.*

Urum-Shar (U), **Level 25 Solo Lurker**
Ancient brown dragon
Gargantuan natural magical beast (dragon) XP 35,000

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision, tremorsense 20
HP 1,160; **Bloodied** 580; see also *bloodied breath*
AC 43; **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 41
Resist 30 fire
Saving Throws +5
Speed 12, burrow 10, fly 8 (hover), overland flight 16
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will)
Reach 4; +31 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage.

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 4; +31 vs. AC; 2d8 + 9 damage.

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The dragon makes two claw attacks.

Sand Spray (immediate reaction, when the dragon is attacked by an enemy using a ranged attack; at-will)
Ranged 20; targets the triggering enemy; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the dragon's next turn.

Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close blast 10; +28 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 7 damage. This power creates an area of swirling sand that remains in place until the end of the dragon's next turn. Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the area or that moves through the area takes 15 damage. The area blocks line of sight for all creatures except the dragon.

Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
The dragon's *breath weapon* recharges, and the dragon uses it immediately.

Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +28 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Quicksand Vortex (minor; encounter)
Close burst 5; +28 vs. Fortitude; the target slides 3 squares and is slowed until the end of the dragon's next turn.

Sandstorm (standard; encounter)
Close burst 20; targets enemies; +29 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target slides 5 squares. This power creates an area of swirling sand that remains in place until the end of the dragon's next turn. The area blocks line of sight for all creatures except the dragon.

Sand Cloud (move; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Polymorph**
The brown dragon transforms into a cloud of sand and shifts a number of squares up to its speed. It can move through occupied squares but must end in a legal space. Any creature whose space the dragon enters takes 3d6 + 7 damage and is blinded (save ends). The dragon returns to its normal form at the end of this move.

Combat Advantage
The dragon deals 4d6 extra damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Endurance +24, Stealth +23
Str 29 (+21) **Dex** 22 (+18) **Wis** 24 (+19)
Con 24 (+19) **Int** 20 (+17) **Cha** 20 (+17)

Tactics

Round 1: Urum-Shar uses her *frightful presence*. If she stuns at least half the party, she spends an action point to attack the remainder. If she does not stun half the group, she transforms into sand to attack the PCs.

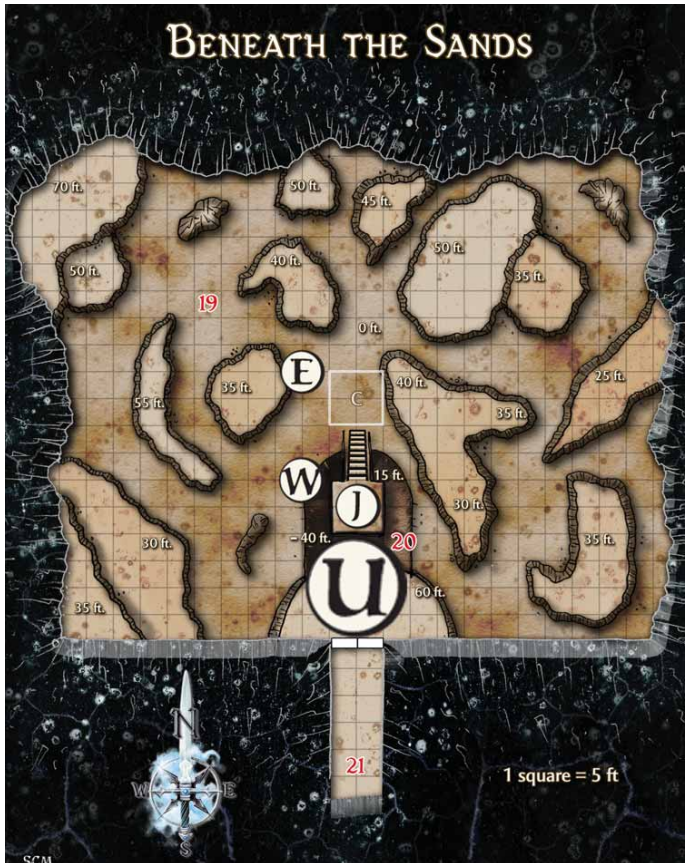
Round 2+: Urum-Shar uses her abilities as appropriate for the circumstances, and she rarely remains in one place for more than 1 round. If one or two PCs are away from the others—perhaps forced to move away by the jaws of death—she focuses on them. Urum-Shar fights to the death.

Features of the Area

Doors: These heavy stone doors require a DC 35 Athletics check to batter open, or a DC 28 Thievery check to unlock.

Pit (area 20): The pit is not a trap because it is blatantly obvious, though its inhabitant is not. The pit is 40 feet deep. Climbing its walls requires DC 30 Athletics checks.

Platform: The platform that stands above the pit includes the runes that are the focus for the jaws of death trap.



Rock Walls: The PCs can climb a rock ledge or outcropping by with DC 25 Athletics checks.

Smooth Walls: The south wall of the chamber and the sides of the semicircular platform are smooth. Climbing them requires DC 30 Athletics checks.

About the Author

Ari Marmell has been shirking homework in favor of playing the D&D® game since he was nine years old. Thankfully, he now works in the industry, since shirking work for gaming tends to wreak havoc with the bills. He has written for quite a few of the industry's major companies, including White Wolf and, of course, Wizards of the Coast.

Dread Wraith (W) **Level 25 Lurker**
Large shadow humanoid (undead) XP 7,000

Initiative +25 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
Shroud of Night aura 5; bright light in the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62; see also *death strike*
Regeneration 20 (if the dread wraith takes radiant damage, regeneration is negated until the end of the wraith's next turn)
AC 37; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37
Immune disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 30 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant (see also *regeneration* above)
Speed fly 10 (hover); phasing; see also *shadow glide*

⊕ **Dread Blade** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 2; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 9 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

✧ **Death Shriek** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Psychic**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; +27 vs. Will; 4d6 + 9 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not dazed.

Combat Advantage ✦ **Necrotic**
The dread wraith deals 3d6 extra necrotic damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Shadow Glide (move; encounter)
The dread wraith shifts 6 squares.

Spawn Wraith
Any humanoid killed by a dread wraith rises as a free-willed dread wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +26
Str 18 (+16) **Dex** 28 (+21) **Wis** 12 (+13)
Con 20 (+17) **Int** 14 (+14) **Cha** 28 (+21)

Earthen Wyvern (E) **Level 26 Warder**
Trap XP 9,000

Hanging from the ceiling, a stone carving of a wyvern spits a vicious stream of a harmful alchemical mixture.

Trap: This stone wyvern shoots a sticky substance at those who end their turn within 8 squares of it.

Perception
✦ DC 27: The character notices that the mouth of the wyvern is a hole that goes deep into the statue.

Trigger
When a target ends its turn within range, the wyvern spits as an immediate reaction.

Attack
Immediate Reaction **Ranged** 8
Target: The creature that triggered the trap
Attack: +31 vs. Will
Hit: 6d8 + 10 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Countermeasures
✦ A character adjacent to the stone wyvern can attempt to disarm the trap with a DC 31 Thievery check.

Jaws of Death (J) **Level 25 Elite Lurker**
Trap XP 14,000

Wispy, wraithlike serpents with draconic heads lash out, biting bodies and souls.

Trap: The trap's activation is contingent on the activation of the earthen wyvern trap. When that trap is triggered, so is this one.

Perception
✦ DC 28: The character notices runes carved into the aide of the platform where the trap is located.

Trigger
When the trap is triggered, this trap rolls initiative.
Initiative +6

Attack
Standard Action **Ranged** sight
Target: Two creatures in range
Attack: +29 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target slides 6 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

Countermeasures
✦ A character can attack the runes inscribed into the platform (AC/Reflex 4, Fortitude 10, hp 165). Destroying the runes deactivates the trap.
✦ Any radiant damage dealt to the runes delays the trap for 1 round (in addition to dealing damage).

This article gives D&D Insiders the chance to get a first look at *Dungeon Delve*, the new hardcover D&D supplement releasing in February, 2009. Straight from the pages of *Dungeon Delve*, we bring you "Summer's End," a short adventure for 18th-level characters.

If you've never played in a delve before, you're missing out. This short adventure is basically a short series of encounters. A delve can be dropped into an existing adventure as a short Side Trek, fill in for a session of your regular game if you didn't have time to prepare, or just be a great change of pace. Each delve takes roughly 3–4 hours to complete. If your group isn't 18th level, you might also consider having your players roll up temporary characters, or temporarily advance their existing characters, to give the delve-style adventure a spin.

If you'd like to see more delve adventures in the pages of *Dungeon*, let us know by sending email to dndinsider@wizards.com.

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PARAGON 11–20

Summer's End

by Bill Slavicsek

illustration by Zoltan Boros and Gabor Szikszai

cartography by Jason A. Engle

Jelendra, a tulani of summer, has gathered a small following of dark fey creatures to help her get revenge against the Highridge Arcane eladrin elders. When they had the nerve to question her interest (they called it "obsession") in the destructive power of the Wild Hunt, Jelendra flew into a rage and stormed out of the Highridge Arcane. Now, she controls a fane to an ancient spirit of the Wild Hunt.

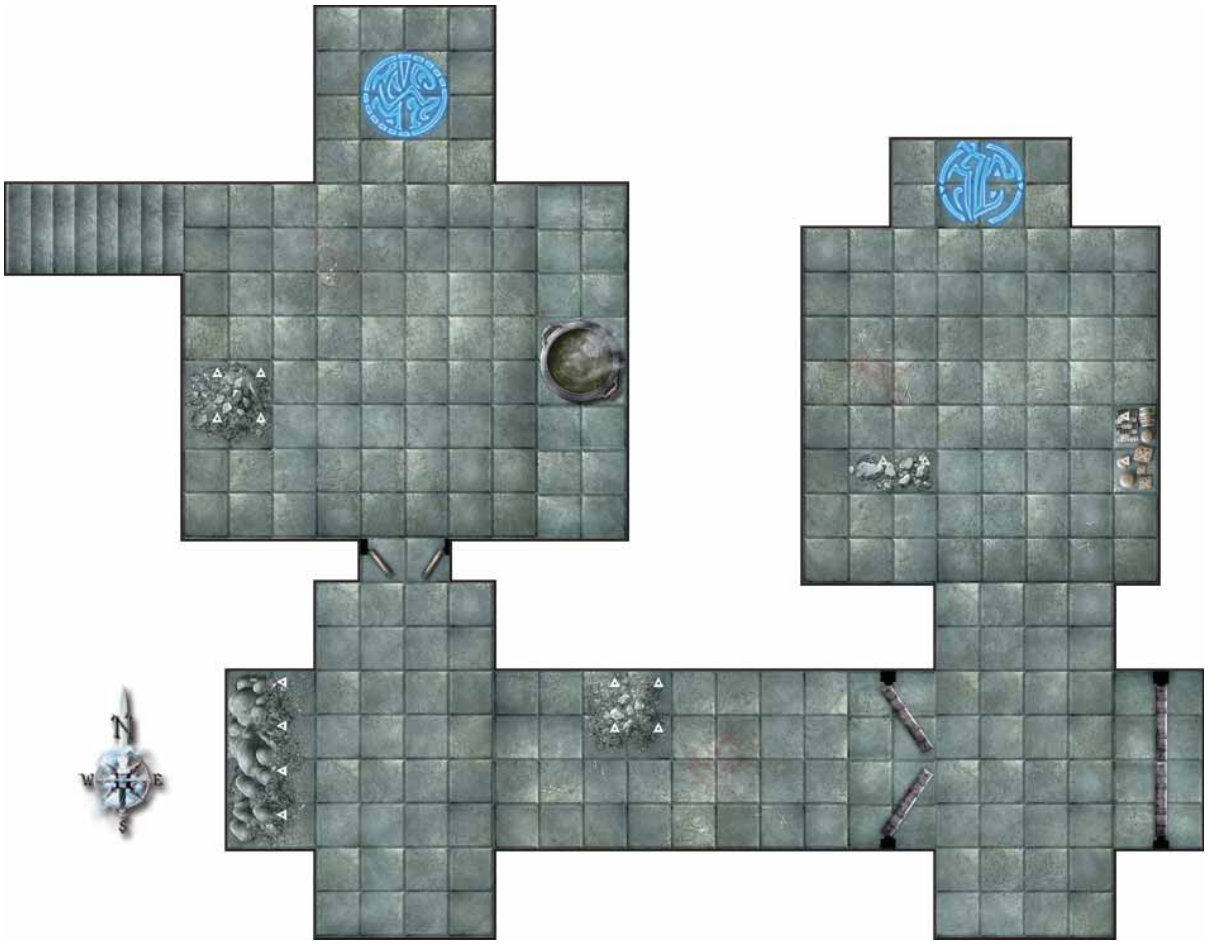
Not knowing what became of her, the elders ask the adventurers to find Jelendra. "Let her know that she is missed, and we want her to return home," one elder says.

Tiles: This delve uses tiles from *DT7: Fane of the Forgotten Gods*.

Expanding the Delve

To turn this delve into a full-blown adventure, consider these arcs:

- Have the PCs begin at Highridge Arcane, where the elders paint the tale of Jelendra as a frightened youngster who has inexplicably left home. With a DC 25 Streetwise check, the PCs learn from a young eladrin that Jelendra wasn't as innocent as the elders claim. With a DC 27 Streetwise check, the youngster tells them that Jelendra was fascinated with the Wild Hunt. If the PCs fail the Streetwise check, they think they are setting off on a rescue mission.
- Run the PCs through a skill challenge in the forest where they must locate Jelendra. First, they must find the path through what looks like a large boulder (Arcana). On the other side, they must find the hag (Perception) and convince it to tell them what it knows of Jelendra (Diplomacy or Intimidate). If they fail, the hag sends them toward what looks like a path into the forest but is actually a small cliff. After tumbling down it, the PCs each expend a healing surge and fall prone into the hands of a group of quickling zephyrs (*MM* 215) rounded out with a cyclops hewer (*MM* 47). If they are successful, the hag directs them to the proper path. If the PCs are quiet, they can surprise the quickling zephyrs and cyclops hewer guarding the entrance to Jelendra's fane.
- Jelendra successfully releases the ancient spirit of the Wild Hunt before the PCs reach her, and it descends on the the Highridge Arcane. If you use this option, the Wild Hunt spirit has the abilities and statistics of an elder green dragon.
- The PCs become the quarry of the Wild Hunt, finding themselves chased by several eladrin knights (*MM* 102) and four wild hunt hounds.



Encounter 18–1: The Angry Trees

Encounter Level 18 (10,400 XP)

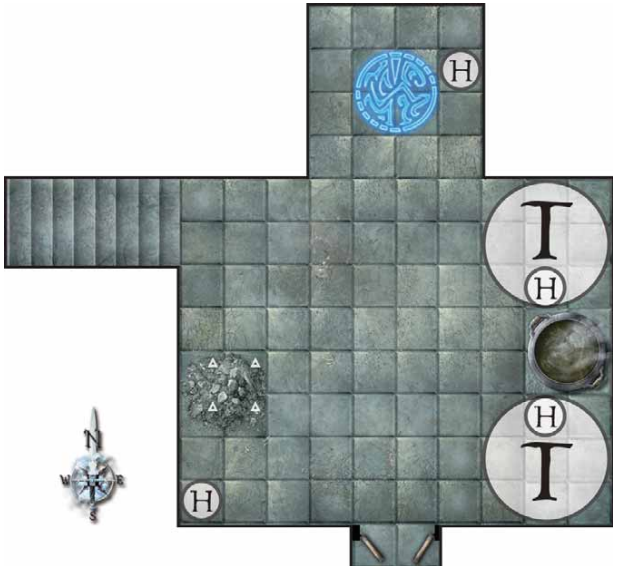
Setup

2 treants (T)
4 windrage harpies (H)

The adventurers follow rumors and eyewitness sightings until they come to a narrow opening in a fey mound.

When the adventurers descend the stairs, read:

The narrow tunnel widens into a staircase of stone that descends into a large, mist-filled chamber. While the floor of the chamber is made of worked stone, the walls and ceiling appear to be hard-packed dirt. Across the chamber, the mist shrouds two large trees.



Perception Check
DC 24: *Even though no wind blows, the tree branches occasionally move.*

Tactics

The treants are loyal to Jelendra and seek to prevent any intruders from moving deeper into the fane. They attempt to use their superior reach, attacking foes from up to 3 squares away. They use their *earthshaking stomps* on different rounds to deal damage to targets and knock them prone.

Two of the harpies start out hidden among the branches of the treants, while the other two hide in distant corners of the room. On their first turns in the encounter, the harpies all begin to sing, unleashing a constant torrent of air that swirls throughout the chamber.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light shines from luminescent mold growing on the walls and ceiling.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this area is 30 feet high.

Cauldron of Mist: Mist spills from the vessel to fill the room. Fey creatures in the mist receive +2 bonuses to all attacks. If the cauldron is destroyed (hit points 80; AC 4; Fortitude 12, Reflex 4), the mist dissipates at the end the destroyer's next turn.

Glowing Runes: With a DC 20 Arcana check, PCs learn that the runes on the floor of the northern alcove indicate that an arcane ritual has been initiated.

Rubble: A pile of broken rock on the side of the chamber opposite the cauldron is difficult terrain and is tall enough to provide cover.

2 Treants (T) — **Level 16 Elite Controller**
Huge fey magical beast (plant) — XP 2,800 each

Initiative +9 — **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision
Grasping Roots aura 3; nonflying enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 316; **Bloodied** 158
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 32
Vulnerable fire (a treant takes ongoing 5 fire damage [save ends] when damaged by fire).
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8 (forest walk)
Action Points 1

Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.

Awaken Forest (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Zone**
Area burst 3 within 10; trees come alive and attack the treant's enemies within the zone; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage. The treant makes new attack rolls when it sustains the zone.

Earthshaking Stomp (standard; encounter)
Close burst 2; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone if it's Medium or smaller.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is not knocked prone.

Alignment Unaligned — **Languages** Elven
Skills Nature +20, Stealth +14

Str 24 (+15)	**Dex** 12 (+9)	**Wis** 24 (+15)
Con 22 (+14)	**Int** 14 (+10)	**Cha** 12 (+9)

4 Windrage Harpies (H) — **Level 15 Artillery**
Medium fey humanoid — XP 1,200 each

Initiative +12 — **Senses** Perception +14
Windrage Song (**Acid**) aura 10; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 acid damage (deafened creatures take 5 acid damage).
HP 118; **Bloodied** 59
AC 27; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27
Resist 10 acid
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)

Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 acid damage.

Acid Gale (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Acid**
Close blast 3; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 acid damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).

Alignment Evil — **Languages** Common, Elven

Str 16 (+10)	**Dex** 20 (+12)	**Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 22 (+13)	**Int** 13 (+8)	**Cha** 22 (+13)

Encounter 18–2: Ruined Corridor

Encounter Level 18 (10,200 XP)

Setup

4 cyclops warriors (W)
2 cyclops reavers (R)
1 cyclops earthquake shaman (S)

The battle in the first chamber alerts the cyclopses in the corridor to the presence of intruders. The cyclopses are ready for a battle when the adventurers move through the open doors from the north.

When an adventurer looks out of the chamber, read:

A wide corridor stretches before you. On the west side, collapsed pillars cover the floor of a large alcove. On the east side, the corridor continues. Standing in the corridor, battleaxes held high, are four one-eyed giants. The one closest to you yells out as it spots you.

If any of the adventurers understand Elven, read:

The one-eyed giant yells out as it spots you, "For Jelendra! For the Wild Hunt!"

Tactics

The cyclops warriors serve as the first line of defense. They try to use their superior reach to best advantage, but otherwise they shift backward each round to draw the PCs into the corridor. Their goal is to draw the PCs deep enough in so that the earthquake shaman can use its ranged powers against them.

The cyclops reavers move forward to attack the adventurers from the side corridor. They fight to shore up any breaks in the line caused by the PCs defeating the warriors. They consider it their job to keep the earthquake shaman out of close-quarters combat.

The earthshaker shaman keeps the other cyclopses between himself and the adventurers. He uses his *fury quake* attacks, saving *quake blast* for when the adventurers get too close. He turns to his *earthshaker staff* as a last resort when a PC moves into melee range.

Earthshaker Staff **Level 14+**

This staff, topped with a shard of darkest obsidian, appears solid and unbending, like the ground itself.

Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Implement (Staff)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 force damage per plus
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when using a power with the force keyword. That power gains a push 1 effect. If the affected power already has a push effect, increase the distance pushed by 1 square.

4 Cyclops Warriors **Level 16 Minion**
Large fey humanoid XP 350 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +18; truesight 6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 32; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 29
Speed 6

Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 8 damage.

Evil Eye (immediate reaction, when a melee attack misses the cyclops warrior; at-will)
The cyclops warrior makes a melee basic attack against the attacker.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

Str 25 (+15)	**Dex** 16 (+11)	**Wis** 20 (+13)
Con 22 (+14)	**Int** 10 (+8)	**Cha** 13 (+9)

Equipment hide armor, heavy shield, battleaxe

2 Cyclops Reavers **Level 18 Soldier**
Large fey humanoid XP 2,000 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +19; truesight 6
HP 174; **Bloodied** 87
AC 34; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 30
Speed 8

Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +25 vs. AC; 1d12 + 11 damage.

Evil Eye (minor; at-will)
Ranged 20; the cyclops reaver can designate only one target with its *evil eye* at a time and gains the following effects:
✦ If the designated target misses one of the cyclops reaver's allies with a melee attack, the cyclops reaver can make a melee basic attack against that enemy as an immediate reaction.
✦ If the designated target moves out of the cyclops reaver's reach, the cyclops reaver can shift 1 square toward the target as an immediate reaction.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven

Str 26 (+17)	**Dex** 16 (+12)	**Wis** 21 (+14)
Con 22 (+15)	**Int** 10 (+9)	**Cha** 13 (+10)

Equipment chainmail, light shield, battleaxe

Cyclops Earthquake Shaman (S)	Level 19 Elite Artillery
Large fey humanoid	XP 4,800
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +21; truesight 6
HP 284; **Bloodied** 142	
AC 33; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 34	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
Earthshaker Staff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force, Weapon**	
Reach 2; +24 vs. AC; 2d4 + 8 force damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the shaman's next turn.	
Fury Quake (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**	
Ranged 20; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 8 force damage.	
Evil Eye (minor; at-will)	
Ranged 20; +22 vs. Fortitude; the shaman can designate only one target with its evil eye at a time. The target takes -2 to defenses, and takes 1d6 extra damage when hit by the shaman's allies (save ends).	
Quake Blast (standard; encounter) ✦ **Force**	
Close blast 5; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 8 force damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Elven
Str 18 (+13)	**Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 25 (+16)
Con 22 (+15)	**Int** 15 (+11) **Cha** 15 (+11)
Equipment leather armor, *+4 earthshaker staff*	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light glows from fungi covering the walls and ceiling of the area.

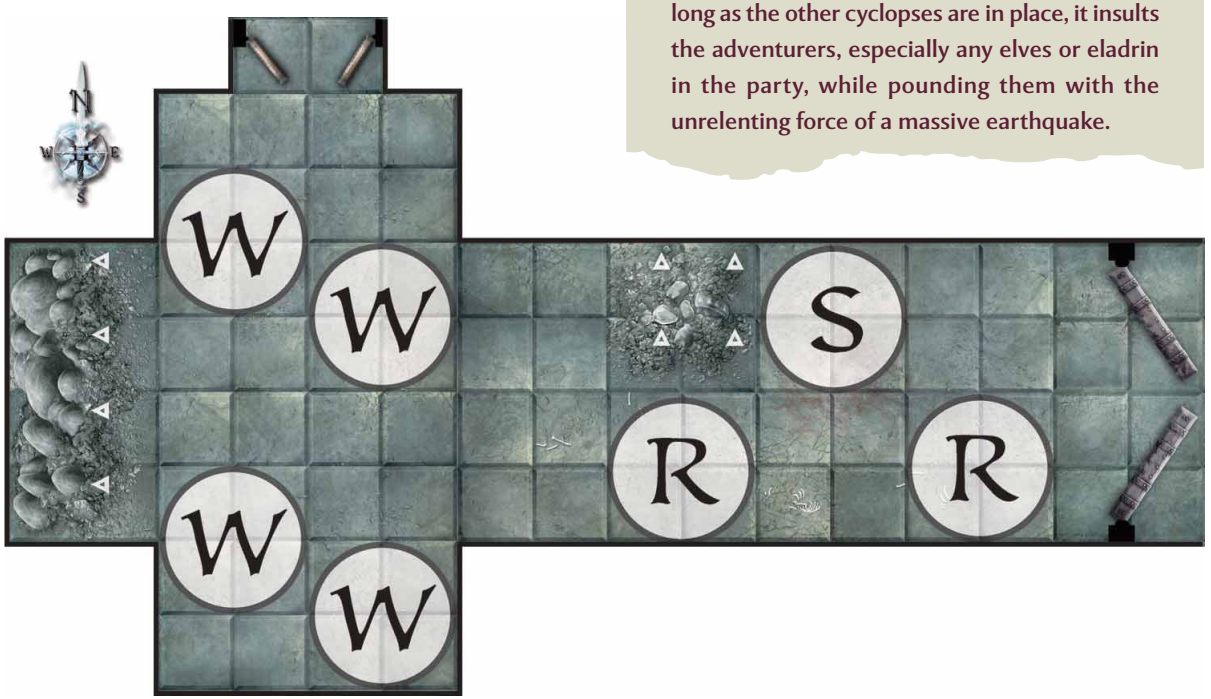
Ceiling: The ceiling in this area is 30 feet high.

Difficult Terrain: The alcove to the west contains the shattered remains of collapsed pillars, while a portion of the eastern corridor is full of rubble.

Box: If the PCs search the alcove to the west and make a DC 25 Perception check, they discover a small wooden box buried in the rubble. The box has the symbol of the Wild Hunt inscribed on its lid. It takes a DC 20 Thievery check to unlock the box. Inside the box, the PCs find a *periapt of wisdom +4* (*PH* 251).

Doors: A pair of large metal doors separates the corridor from whatever lies to the east. The doors hang slightly open throughout the battle in this area.

Treasure: The shaman has a gem worth 5,000 gp, two *potions of vitality*, and an *earthshaker staff* (see the statistics block on page 59).



Portraying the Shaman

The earthquake shaman is a powerful cyclops that follows Jelendra because it hopes to see her unleash an ancient spirit of the Wild Hunt upon the eladrin of the Highridge Arcane. Unlike the other cyclopses in its band, the shaman doesn't blindly follow the eladrin of summer. In many ways, it has played upon her obsession to further its own plans. It is devoted to the destructive power of the Wild Hunt.

The shaman disdains the adventurers. As long as the other cyclopses are in place, it insults the adventurers, especially any elves or eladrin in the party, while pounding them with the unrelenting force of a massive earthquake.

Encounter 18–3: Lodge of the Hunt

Encounter Level 21 (16,400 XP)

Setup

Jelendra, tulani of summer (J)
2 death hags (D)
3 wild hunt hounds (H)

Jelendra waits in the hunting lodge, working to complete the ritual that will release a spirit of the Wild Hunt and provide her with the power she hopes will grant her revenge against the Highridge Arcane.

The wild hunt hounds sit quietly in the open archway, watching as the adventurers approach. As soon as one of the PCs moves closer to the lodge chamber or makes a hostile action, the hounds leap into action.

When the adventurers walk through the doors, read:

A massive entry hall appears deserted. Heavy metal doors across from you are shut tight, while bright, warm light spills from the arched opening to the north.

When the adventurers look into the northern chamber, read:

Three massive hounds sit in the open archway, bathed in warm light. Beyond the archway, the heads of various animals from a variety of worlds are mounted on the walls. A little distance into the room, three female eladrins look up as you approach.

Tactics

The wild hunt hounds never attack from the same location twice if they can help it. They constantly move around the intruders, using *mobile melee attack* to get good positions and gain combat advantage. The hounds are loyal to Jelendra, and they fight to the death to protect her from the adventurers.

Jelendra, the tulani of summer, is furious that the adventurers have interrupted her work. Her first action after the PCs arrive is to use a minor action to return her carefully crafted ritual scroll back to the pouch she wears on her belt. Then she moves to take a position in the glowing runes in the northern alcove so that she can use the power they bestow on her against the intruders (see the entry below for details).

Jelendra attacks from range, only moving in to employ melee attacks when the PCs get too close or her protectors have fallen. Enraged by the intrusion and driven mad by her obsession, the tulani of summer fights to the death.

The death hags, meanwhile, start the encounter in the form of female eladrins that look strikingly similar to Jelendra (using their *change shape* ability). They pretend to be timid and afraid as the battle begins, waiting until a PC gets close or they can move into a good position before slipping back into their natural shapes and using their *life drain* attacks. Once the power recharges, a death hag saves it for when it needs to regain hit points.

Longsword of Summer **Level 15+**

This longsword is engraved with Rellanic runes and glows like the summer sun.

Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Heavy Blade
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d8 damage per plus
Property: The weapon deals 1d8 extra fire damage when it hits.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power to make you and this weapon glow with the bright light of the summer sun at high noon. This increases your defenses by +4 until the end of your next turn.

2 Death Hags (D) **Level 18 Soldier**
Medium fey humanoid XP 2,000 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 171; **Bloodied** 85; see also *life drain*
AC 34; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32
Resist 10 necrotic
Speed 6

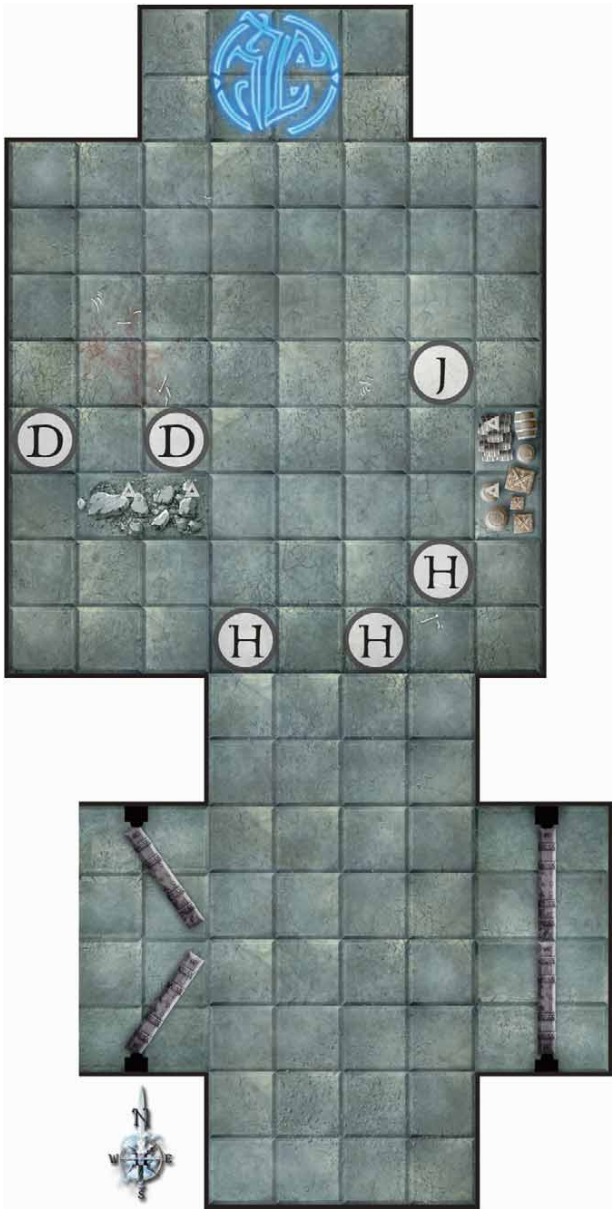
Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+24 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is marked and cannot spend healing surges or regain hit points until the end of the death hag's next turn.

Life Drain (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Close blast 3; +22 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage, and the death hag regains 5 hit points for each creature damaged by this attack.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
A death hag can alter its physical form to appear as female of any Medium humanoid race (see Change Shape, *MM* 280).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Bluff +19, Insight +17, Intimidate +19, Nature +17

Str 25 (+16)	**Dex** 18 (+13)	**Wis** 17 (+12)
Con 19 (+13)	**Int** 16 (+12)	**Cha** 20 (+14)



3 Wild Hunt Hounds (H)	Level 21 Skirmisher
Medium fey magical beast	XP 3,200 each

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +23; low-light vision
Menacing Growl (**Fear**) aura 10; enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.
HP 205; **Bloodied** 102
AC 35 (37 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32
Speed 10, fly 10 (clumsy); see also *mobile melee attack*

Bite (standard; at-will)
+26 vs. AC; 1d8 + 10 damage (1d8 + 20 against an immobilized enemy), and the target cannot teleport and is slowed (save ends both). If the target is already slowed, it is immobilized instead.

Mobile Melee Attack (standard; at-will)
The wild hunt hound can move up to 5 squares and make one bite attack at any point during that movement. The hound doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of its attack.

Combat Advantage
A wild hunt hound deals 1d8 extra damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Endurance +24, Stealth +24

Str 30 (+20)	**Dex** 28 (+19)	**Wis** 27 (+18)
Con 29 (+19)	**Int** 6 (+8)	**Cha** 9 (+9)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Chandeliers provide bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this area is 30 feet high.

Glowing Runes: These runes are part of an arcane ritual. When Jelendra steps into the glowing circle, she gains the *arrow of the Wild Hunt* power (see her statistics block).

Difficult Terrain: There is rubble in the western portion of the northern chamber, and there are crates and boxes to the east.

Jelendra, Tulani of Summer (J)	Level 20 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (eladrin)	XP 2,800

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +14; low-light vision
HP 186; **Bloodied** 93
AC 34; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 33
Resist 20 radiant, 10 fire; **Vulnerable** necrotic (slowed until the end of Jelendra's next turn)
Saving Throws +5 against charm effects
Speed 6, fly 9 (hover); see also *fey step*

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**
+25 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage plus 1d8 fire damage.

Summer Breeze Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**
Requires longsword; Jelendra can shift 2 squares before the attack; +25 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage plus 1d8 fire damage.

Arrow of the Wild Hunt (standard; at-will)
Ranged 20; +23 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). Jelendra can use this power only if she stands in the glowing circle (see "Features of the Area"). If the runes in area 1 have been disrupted, this power deals reduced damage of 2d8 + 7.

Scorching Blast (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close blast 5; +23 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and weakened (save ends).

Fey Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Jelendra can teleport up to 5 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +20, History +20, Intimidate +23, Nature +19

Str 16 (+13)	**Dex** 25 (+17)	**Wis** 18 (+14)
Con 18 (+14)	**Int** 16 (+13)	**Cha** 27 (+18)

Equipment chainmail, *+4 longsword of summer*

Treasure: The crates and boxes contain food, ale, and the materials Jelendra needs to complete the ritual to release the spirit of the Wild Hunt. Jelendra carries the following valuables: 290 pp, the ritual of release (the details of which are left to the Dungeon Master), and a *longsword of summer* +4 (described on page 61).

About the Author

Bill Slavicsek is the R&D Director for roleplaying games and book publishing at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His design credits include *d20 Modern*®, the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, the *Eberron*® *Campaign Setting*, and *Dungeons & Dragons*® *for Dummies*, among others.

The Villains of Greenbrier

BY JAMES WYATT

In thinking last month about the overarching story of the campaign, and using prophecy as a tool for tying characters into that story, I also hit on the need for some better-developed villains for the campaign. When I speak of villains, I mean more than just the monsters the characters will be hacking through as they delve into the chasm. The campaign needs malevolent humanoid *villains* that the characters can struggle against and grow to hate as the campaign develops.

Last time, I planted the seed for one villainous group, so that's where we'll start.

The Keepers, Revisited

Inspired by Oded Fehr in *The Mummy*, I'm going to use the idea of a secret organization oath-sworn to prevent the imprisoned aberration beneath Greenbrier from escaping. Now it's time to flesh that organization out, as both villains and potential allies.

We'll call them the Keepers, for now, because that's what I called them last month. (*Manual of the Planes* has a monster called the keeper, a relative of the old Planescape monster of the same name—and the gardhyi from Alternity. Looking at the monster, I'm not thinking of obvious ways to link them to this organization, but it might prove interesting to think about that down the line. It would be cool if the apparent coincidence of name turns out to be more than a coincidence.) They were founded by the adventurers who first imprisoned the monster beneath Greenbrier, at roughly the same time as the empire of Nerath was founded. The order was formed based on a sacred oath to protect the aberration's prison and keep the monster bound for all time.

Over the prosperous centuries of Nerath's reign, the Keepers fractured. One sect delved into ancient prophecies and uncovered predictions of the aberration's release, and decided—as they descended into madness—to facilitate its release. The other sect remained true to the Keepers' original goal and sought to prevent their kindred from releasing the aberration, but a hundred and eight years ago, this sect finally failed in its sacred duty. In a terrible confluence of events including the appearance of the Dragon's Tear comet, a horrible invasion of gnolls that weakened the empire, and the ultimate triumph of the corrupted Keepers, the monster escaped its prison. The empire fell, the forest went up in flames, and the monster disappeared.

One branch of the Keepers remains true to its ancient promise. They seek a way to return the ancient aberration to its prison, or destroy it for good so it no longer threatens the world. However, they take the threat of the monster's existence very personally. Despite the far-reaching consequences of the monster's escape, they view it as a Keeper matter, and carry the burden of responsibility for dealing with the danger—a burden they don't want to share with the rest of the world.

So that's the branch of the Keepers that one of the player characters will be connected with. I'll work out the exact details with the player, but my general thought is that this character was born into the Keepers, inherited this mission of returning the monster to its prison, and treats it as a horrible personal secret. As the campaign progresses, though, I expect this

character to break with tradition and let the other player characters in on the secret in order to secure their help against the monster.

The Kindred of the Shattered Gate

The other sect of the Keepers has a new name, for clarity's sake. The Kindred are actually more an organization dedicated to studying the ancient prophecies surrounding the aberrant monster than true heirs of the Keepers' mission. Unfortunately, they have discovered that one or all of the player characters has a part to play in the Prophecy.

Here's where I'll make use of the idea I outlined last week: to have each player detail a time in childhood when the character had a close brush with death. With the exception of the character connected to the Keepers, each of those brushes with death was actually the work of the Kindred.

Why not the Keeper character? I have a crazy idea in my head that there's still sort of a pact of honor between the two branches of the old Keepers. On top of that, it's possible that the Kindred can't see the Keepers' role in the prophecy—it's a blind spot in their knowledge. So (a) they couldn't foretell the Keeper character's involvement in destroying the aberration in the campaign's future, and (b) even if they had, their code prohibits them from directly harming the Keeper.

I like the blind spot more than the pact of honor, and if one of them has to go it will be the latter. But I also like the idea that when the PCs have their first combat confrontation with the Kindred, the Keeper character can shout out a code word that makes the Kindred retreat. That might be the first clue the other characters get that the Keeper character knows more than they do about what's going on.

Those Who Hear

I have talked about using or adapting my 3rd Edition adventure *The Speaker in Dreams* for the characters' visit to Lake Town, largely because that adventure involved a cabal of alienists called Those Who Hear. These mad sorcerers summoned a creature from the Far Realm into the midst of the city, and ultimately serve the mind flayer villain of that adventure.

Last month, I outlined my plan to bring the characters to Silverymoon to learn more about the Society of the Sanctified Mind. I also decided that while they were there, I could bring them into conflict with this cult of aberration-worshipers, which would lead them on to Lake Town in the next adventure.

So at this point, I'm not sure how much of the plot or encounters of *The Speaker in Dreams* I'll end up using, and it looks like I want to make Those Who Hear a much more significant part of that adventure than they were in the original. Rather than fairly useless minions of the mind flayer boss, I'll make them the ultimate villains of the adventure, and their influence spreads beyond Lake Town.

Those Who Hear, then, becomes a small but tenacious cult dedicated to the creature they call the Speaker in Dreams. In the original adventure, that was Ghaerleth Axom, the mind flayer, but I want to give that title to something bigger. Both *Lords of Madness* and the new *Manual of the Planes* discuss Mak Thuum Ngatha, the Nine-Tongued Worm, a powerful entity of the Far Realm. *Manual of the Planes* mentions that other monstrous entities of similar power, comparable to deities or primordials, exist in the Far Realm, and I'm going to say that the Speaker in Dreams is the cult's name for one of these. Not Mak Thuum Ngatha, necessarily, but some other being they believe whispers to their insane minds as they sleep.

Is the Speaker in Dreams the aberrant monstrosity that was once imprisoned beneath Greenbrier? It should be. I don't want this campaign to become an instrument that can play only a single note, but introducing a cult dedicated to a second powerful Far Realm entity, when so much of the campaign seems to revolve around the first, would be madness. So the creature imprisoned beneath what is now Greenbriar Chasm has a name: The Speaker in Dreams. It probably has other names as well, hopefully something as cool as Mak Thuum Ngatha. Or Azathoth.

Those Who Hear will include elements of the Cults of the Dragon Below from the Eberron campaign, possibly including such things as grafts and symbionts. The forthcoming *Eberron Campaign Guide* includes some statistics for cultists of the Dragon Below that I can adapt or use for these cultists in my game. They're levels 8 to 10, which means they could work well as the climactic villains at the end of the characters' stint in Lake Town, which I have penciled in for levels 6–8. That's a handy coincidence! I also happen to know that the still-in-design *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* will have a nifty new tool I can use to help me flesh out more of these cultists for my game.

Madreus, the main villain of *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*, will be a member of Those Who Hear. By the time the characters have finished dealing with the cult in Lake Town, they should have heard a thing or two about the mighty, insane sorcerer Madreus, revered by the cultists, who left Lake Town over eighty years ago, pursuing some mad vision into the mountains to the west. . . .

Something Different

That comment about not wanting this campaign to play only one note got me thinking: How can I introduce a second, lesser threat to the campaign? Something that will provide some variety from the throngs of aberrant monsters and deranged Far Realm cultists the characters are going to be spending a lot of time fighting?

The answer has to be simple: Steal it. I need something I can pick up pretty much whole cloth from somewhere else and weave into my campaign as I see fit, because I've already committed myself to do a lot of work in building the adventures of this campaign. I'm using a lot of older material that's going to require significant changes to make functional in 4th Edition and to fit smoothly into my campaign. I need something easy.

So I pulled my copy of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* off the shelf and started flipping through the Threats chapter for inspiration. The Warlock Knights of Vaasa are tempting—there's a whole lot of cool there, from their name to their look and right on down to the powers in every statistics block in that entry. But as I flipped on through the chapter, an important realization hit me:

Dragons.

I spotted the Cult of the Dragon entry, and I realized that my campaign arc was full of dungeons, but very lacking in dragons. Introducing dragons as a subtheme for the campaign is the perfect solution: They don't have to come up too often (because you don't want too many dragon fights), but there's a good reason for them to come up once in a while.

What I need is a pretty simple story reason for dragons to keep showing up. Once I have that, I can use resources like the lairs in *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons*, which are ready-to-use mini-adventures I can just drop into my game, as well as dragon encounters I pull from other adventures. I actually think that the Chamber, Eberron's secretive cabal of dragons trying to manipulate history in accordance with their Prophecy, is a better fit for what I need than the Cult of the Dragon.

With an organization of dragons similar to the Chamber, I have ties to the existing plotlines and themes of my campaign, because I've already established the importance of some ancient prophecies. But this lets me broaden the prophecy to deal with more than just the binding, liberation, and destruction of the Speaker in Dreams. The Chamber (or whatever I call it in my campaign) is interested in the whole cycle of the prophecy, not just this part of it, and they can draw characters in to adventures that would otherwise be completely tangential to the arc of my campaign.

Most importantly, they can give my characters a good reason to fight a dragon every now and then.

Speaking of Dragons . . .

With the launch of *Draconomicon* this month, and related features in the pages of *Dragon Magazine*, it occurs to me that I haven't really talked about the ancient empire of Arkhosia. I tied the imprisonment of the Speaker in Dreams to the founding of Nerath, the last great empire. But I haven't attached the history of the dragonborn empire to any events in this region's history. For that matter, I haven't talked about Bael Turath, either. Should I?

I don't think I will. In addition to being remote in history, I'm going to assume (at least for now) that those empires also existed in places far removed from Greenbrier, which might have been a remote backwater inhabited by human nomads while those ancient empires clashed. That decision helps me focus in on my core story: the imprisonment of the Speaker in Dreams, which coincided in history with the human Empire of Nerath.

I'm also thinking about *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*. The backstory of that adventure includes an incredibly ancient empire of elves, which I think will be eladrin in my version of the adventure. These eladrin are the ones who built the dungeon complex featured in the adventure, and it's good for my story if the ruins and dungeons that the characters explore throughout the campaign are generally either truly ancient relics of that eladrin empire or more recent ruins from Nerath.

I did mention the eladrin city of Cendriane in my campaign handout—it's the Feywild city near Greenbrier that was destroyed when the Speaker in Dreams escaped. If Cendriane preserved any of the ancient knowledge of the Elder Elves (as the *Firestorm Peak* adventure calls them), then exploring the ruins of that place could be an interesting side adventure sometime in my campaign as well.

In fact, the key element of the Elder Elves in the adventure background is that they conducted experiments designed to bridge the worlds. Perhaps Firestorm Peak exists simultaneously in the world, the Feywild, and the Shadowfell, making it an ideal location for their experiments. That could make for an interesting twist when I get around to doing my adaptation of the adventure.

The Idea File

When I started this column series, I led off by going through the as-yet-unpublished *Player's Handbook* and brainstorming ideas about the races and classes in it. It's important for me to keep my eyes on the other material we're producing for the game—not just because it's my job, but because it can also enrich my game. Take, for example, the adventure *The Last Breaths of Ashenport*, by Ari Marmell, in i #156. It's an 8th-level adventure dealing with Lovecraftian horror that would fit quite nicely into my blossoming campaign. Perhaps Lake Town will owe as much to Ashenport as it does to Brindinford of *The Speaker in Dreams*. . .⚔

About the Author

James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the Eberron *Campaign Setting*, *City of the Spider Queen*, and *Oriental Adventures*. His more recent works include *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*, *Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave*, and *The Forge of War*. His third Eberron novel, *Dragon Forge*, was released in 2008.

Do the Right Thing

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

I have a confession to make. I don't always follow the rules.

Worse still, I'm not talking about the occasional rules flub, or being swayed by a dubious but well-intentioned player's argument. I'm not even talking about my handful of campaign's house rules. I'm talking an intentional and blatant disregard for the rules of the Dungeons & Dragons game. Heck, I don't even always follow the rules when I run RPGA Living Forgotten Realms games. I'm a bad man.

That seems terrible doesn't it? After all, I am one of the developers of the game. I should view the rules as sacrosanct, right?

No. And neither should you.

And why do I think this? Well it's complicated. I think I am going to have to wax philosophical for a while to get there. If you hate it when folks wax philosophical, skip the next three paragraphs.

Roleplaying games are special things. Okay, I'm biased, but so are you, so hear me out. Roleplaying games are a real revolution in gaming. In an RPG, the rules are not there to ensure that two or more opposing forces meet on a fair and even ground. That doesn't even really happen during a combat encounter. The rules are there to create a narrative reality were players, game master, and game designers work to determine the shape of the story each in their own way. The rules are there, in principle, to help create a perfect storm of story and chance. It's assumptions of balance are different than a competitive game, and that's a challenge. As designers and developers, we all search for perfection in design toward those goals. We look for ways to make play more intuitive, exciting, and have a good cooperative balance. We make adventures that we think are challenging and fun, with subtle points of design that we hope DMs will pick up through reading or play, and emulate with their own adventures. But at the end of the day, that is probably less than half (or maybe even a quarter of) the equation.

There is an illusion in RPG design, perpetuated by its somewhat legalistic language, the desires of part of the fan base (including designers and developers, at times), the games' propensity for tables, and the existence of the occasional math formula, that the rules of RPGs are somehow a logical language that works best when adhered to strictly and completely. Truth be told, that's all horse hockey.

See, RPGs are only words on the page and abstract points of theory until a DM breathes life into them. And how you go about this process is important. One of the great things about tabletop roleplaying games is that a DM is smarter than a computer. Sure, DMs will make more computing errors, and they won't rule everything consistently every time you play, but as we say around the office, that's a feature, not a bug. When you're a DM, you want to strive to be fair and constant, but you want to adapt, improvise, and overcome.

You're not a computer and you shouldn't try to be. You're more like a director. You have stage cues (the rules). You have a script (the adventure). All you lack is dialog and action. The actors (players) provide that for the protagonists (PCs), and then you ad lib the reactions for the antagonists (villains and NPCs). Because of the game's improvisational nature, you're always on the lookout to make the cues work better, and adjust the script to complement what the heck is going on stage at any give time. It's your job to be always look for the right thing to do—not necessarily the correct thing the rules might state you should do. Let me elaborate...

Untying the Knots

Being a Dungeon Master involves a number of sexy activities (okay, I'm using the term "sexy" loosely here): building dungeons, building stories, and building worlds. Then you have the serious work. D&D can be a complicated game, and it's up to you to unwind the darned thing when it gets jumbled.

Miniatures help. The various forms of initiative tracking help. DM screens help. But the greatest tool that any Dungeon Master can have is common sense. While common sense comes in many forms within everyday life, for the DM it typically comes in the realization that a quick but satisfying abstraction will go farther in preserving your sanity and creating a sense of satisfaction for the players than a slavish dedication to the Rules As Written (or RAW, in the current Internet jargon).

Of course, you can do this in good ways or bad ways. As a rule of thumb, always favor your players when you break the rules to untie knots. I know that sometimes it is hard to watch all of your creatures fall to sword and spell, and watch as your plans come to naught. But that's what happens in D&D. Will your players know that you are bending the rules? Sometimes. Will they care? No. After all, most players ask their DM to bend or break the rules in their favor at least once each session. You don't believe me? Keep that in mind and listen carefully to everything they ask you next game. They're practically begging you to make exceptions to the rules. It's your job to figure out when the time is right to stretch (or break) the system in favor of fun. There are also times when you should create abstractions to aid your monsters and challenges, but I'll cover those later in the column.

Here's an example from one of my games. A quick perusal of artillery monsters will reveal that they have baseline defenses, below average hit points, and usually something that makes it a tad difficult for melee attack characters to approach or stay adjacent to them. Often, just their location on the battlefield and the mix of other monsters in the encounter aids them in achieving that last design goal. These defining traits often create a situation where the artillery monsters are the last critters on the grid. While artillery make great team players, when they're the only ones left on the battlefield, play starts to drag, as these monsters have an increasingly difficult time doing the things that define their role. Two or more skeletal archers, with nearly full hit points, cornered and being hacked to pieces at the end of an encounter can be as exiting as watching someone cut wood—especially when the players' dice go cold. To make things a little more fun—and speed up play—I minionized these monsters, letting one or two hits do the trick once the other monsters in the encounter were out of the picture. After all, they've outlived their usefulness, in terms of encounter design. At that point, there's absolutely no reason to keep the combat going just because the rules say you should. It's better to move on to the next encounter—and more fun.

Look for a way to improve the design. Make it fun.

Letting Things Make Sense

It's going to happen. Every once in a while, you will come across a rule—a power, a monster, a trap, or just some section in the adventure—that just doesn't make sense to you or your players. Maybe you just didn't read it right; maybe it just doesn't fit the tone of your campaign; maybe it just didn't grab you like other things did; maybe it's just dumb. Whatever the reason, if you're like many other DMs, your first tendency might be to discard the rule or worse still, run it as written and complain to your players how dumb it is. Instead, try to push that first instinct to the side and think of a small change or tweak that would help it make sense to you and your group. Look for a way to improve the design. Make it fun.

This is especially true if you have limited time to prepare a game, or you are running a session for Living Forgotten Realms. If you're not "feeling" the adventure, or a segment of the adventure, it's going to show when you run it. Your lack of enthusiasm will seep out and affect your players, and the game will suffer as a result. *Don't friggin' do that!* If you don't think something is fun and exciting, complaining about it might make you look smart for a couple of seconds, but at the expense of a crappy time for everyone at the table with you.

For instance, I really don't like low-level monsters that make you lose a healing surge. To me, losing a healing surge is a pretty big deal. It has its place, but in my opinion, not on a low-level monster that can cause the loss with a melee basic attack (yes, wights, I'm looking at you). The flavor is fine—in fact I like it a lot—but I think the effect doesn't make sense to me at lower levels. It's just too much of a beating. Instead of running the monsters as written, I instead decided that their touch would create a sort of "healing surge denial." Until the end of the creature's next turn, the target can't spend healing surges. This puts an affected PC in danger, but gives them options and confines their tactics. Most importantly, it doesn't shorten the adventuring day. That lets me keep my game going at the pace I want.

Creating Instances of Fun

As the DM, you are the gatekeeper of fun. You follow the rules not only because they are the rules, but because they create fun. If and when you decide to disregard the rules, you should do it for the same reason. You aren't making arbitrary changes, or just trying to increase or decrease the difficulty of the game. You're making an alteration to create suspense, action, excitement, and interesting story—all the things that make the D&D game great!

And since you're a human being, with at least a smidgeon of empathy and insight (unlike your average computer terminal), you can tell when your players are having fun, what they're reacting well to, and—more importantly—what they don't care for. Often you won't know these things until they happen, and then you've got to roll with it. Don't be afraid; just do it.

A while ago, I was able to run some demo games for fans and geek celebs at the exhibit hall of the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) here in Seattle. One of the encounters featured a gaggle of goblins led by a goblin hexer. The goblin hexer's *vexing cloud* power can be a real kick in the shorts for inexperienced groups. Even experienced groups can be strained by warriors and skullcleavers putting up a good defensive spread. One group in particular was really taking the brunt of the hexer's power and just couldn't seem to position themselves out of it. Some of it was due to their tactics, but a lot of the problem involved lousy rolls. During the game, I was using a counter to denote where the center of the burst 3 zone was. I described the spot as a jumbling, cloud-like mass that constantly exuded dark arcane motes that flew around like angry insects, disrupting the PCs' attacks and their ability to see the goblins. Finally, one poor, frustrated guy playing the wizard, frustrated with his inability to make his magic missiles or even his *force orb* hit the hexer where it counts, looked up from his character sheet, his eyes bright with a full-on eureka moment.

"I'll use *mage hand* to move the mote cloud," he said.

Now, I seem to be cursed to always get the guy who wants to do something crazy with *mage hand*. With the release of 4th Edition here at the office, I got to run a game for the guy from archiving who wanted to *mage hand* someone to death in some weird sort of way every round. But archive boy was being absurd and somewhat disruptive, so I had an easy time telling him no, and then pointing him toward his attack powers. The player at PAX had a good idea—one that was interesting, even if it didn't follow the rules. I let him do it. I let him use *mage hand* as an Intelligence modifier attack power against the hexer's Will to move the zone up to 3 squares, but he could only try it once a round.

He hit, moved the zone, and everyone cheered. Thanks to the wizard's cunning plan, the PCs were able to rally and beat the hexer and his brutes.

And everyone had fun.

Huh, you have me a little scared, John. I think the *Dungeon Master's Guide* has a lot of advice on how to make your encounters challenging without making them overwhelming. If you know your players strengths and weaknesses, this should only contribute toward refining your encounter building tactics. I don't think the game is balanced toward an eventuality of a total party kill (TPK) and I don't think you need to resign yourself to that eventuality.

...one of the great things about the RPG is that the end is never certain.

That said, one of the great things about the RPG is that the end is never certain. Dice go cold, a player will come up with a cunning plan with an application that is pure, inspired lunacy, or you'll find a rare monster mix that ends up being truly overwhelming (or you'll just use a host of needledrake swarms at 1st level). When TPKs do happen, the DM has to decide how to move the game forward. The best answer is, of course, the one that fits your story. I've had a few TPKs in my day, and I have done everything to keep the game moving, whether having a powerful patron bring the characters back, to having bad guys raise and dominate them to spy on the forces of good, to just having folks roll up new characters and trying the adventure again (sometimes having PCs play siblings or acquaintances of some of the old characters, driven to find out what happened to the old group). When any character death occurs, it's always a good idea to try and find a way to use the experience to enhance the game and the story. This is even truer of a TPK.

The Mail Bag

Now let's see what interesting goodies are in the mail bag this month.

Save My Game ... Literally

I have a really important question, especially with 4th Edition more so than before. The question is "Should I 'Save My Game'? Here is the problem: Fourth Edition is now more tactical (and arguably more fun) than ever. I'm noticing among my players the disparity in their tactical and strategic capabilities more than I did before. I have always made the attempt in the past to cater the situation and challenge of encounters to the dynamic of the group and, truth be told, in all my years DMing I have never, ever killed a party. Not intentionally, or from holding back dice—and there have been close calls—but never all the way. I am a TPK virgin, as it were. I don't expect this to last through 4th Edition because the encounter deign seems so well balanced, that the game really does challenge the players to their limits when you run them fairly. What I am going to do when they all die?

– Be Gentle, John

Mixed Bag

I am a DM with major issues with my players' interests. I've been DMing for a few years and usually it's with inexperienced players. Unfortunately, now I have a mix of inexperienced players who love to hack-and-slash and power game, and experienced players who love to delve into the story. When I run a lot of combat in a session, the experienced players seem to get bored, but when the experienced players delve into important conversations and into the storyline, the inexperienced players seem to doze off and not care, and sometimes even leave to wait it out! I've tried to run it down the middle, but each side doesn't seem to be satisfied, and I can't afford to lose players since it's a small group to begin with. How should I deal with this?

– Tale-of-Two-Play-Styles Regis

Try mixing the two styles. It's a bit like the middle of the road approach that it sounds like you've tried, but there are some key differences. Take a look at your story. See if there are story revelations that you can unveil during combat rather than through exposition. Heck, you can even have important NPC conversation during a battle. Introduce bad guys who love to chat while they fight. While it is cliché for the bad guy to talk about his plans during a fight, it can also be a fun and useful story device. Characters often need critical pieces of information to move the story along. Characters also tend to be a bunch of unyielding types who rarely leave bad people alive at the end of a battle. Worse still, bad guys tend to be rather craven and want to run when the going gets rough. Discarded notes and chatty bad guys do yeoman's service in making sure the PCs get the information they need.

Don't like the chatty bad guy thing? Have some of the lesser bad guys surrender and treat for their lives with information and roleplaying. They can always double-cross the PCs later if you like.

In short, find ways to mix roleplaying, and combat. A lot of DMs tend to think you need to separate these two things, but you don't. Look at action movies and pulp fiction for way to mix exposition, drama, and action. And then steal, borrow, and expound upon those concepts to your heart's content. ⚔

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Clog Our Mailbox!

Your game needs saving, or you have some game saving advice of your own? Drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com with the worlds Save My Game as your subject line. Maybe next month we'll talk about your problem or feature some bit of advice that comes from the mailbag.

You can also join the game saving conversation on our message boards, but piping in on the discussion of DM tips and tricks. Stephen makes it a point to visit and chat with those who agree and disagree with him.